THE PALADINS OF EDWIN THE GREAT

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM

Gene Prior.

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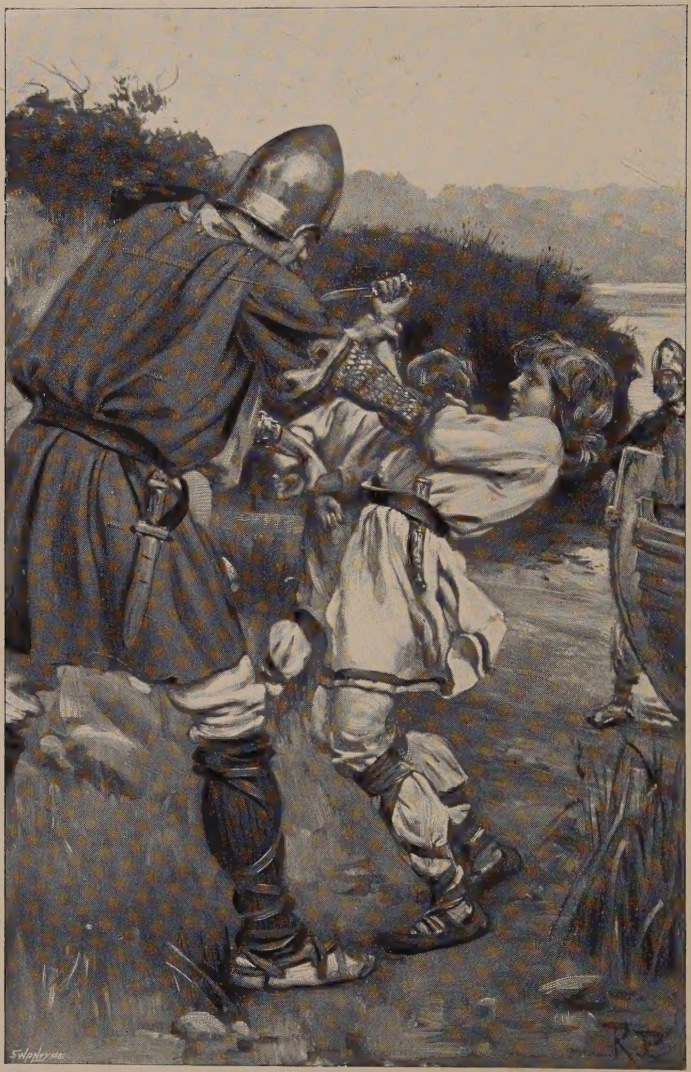

PORLOR AND HIS COMPANIONS KIDNAPPED BY SEA-THIEVES

THE PALADINS

OF

EDWIN THE GREAT

BY

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NEW EDITION

LONDON
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1908

First published September 1896.
Reprinted August 1901. *New Edition September* 1908.

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PREFACE

VERY little is known for certain of one of the most important events in the history of the world, the coming of the Englishmen to England. It took a long time, fully a century, from 450 A.D. to 550 A.D., and they came constantly, in small detachments for the most part, landing on the coast, in all directions, from the Forth to the Isle of Wight. They came amidst the ruins of the mighty Roman Empire, a new race of empire-founders, with all the germs of a still mightier future.

The new-comers from the older Angeln or England, now called Sleswig, came in the greatest numbers. We know not why, but it certainly was a wholesale movement. They kept launching their small fleets of dragon ships, and crossing the North Sea with their gods, their door-posts, and their beautiful golden-haired wives and children, until none were left. They brought with them all the

deep religious feeling, all the imaginative mythology, all the heroic tales of the old land. They first disembarked on the coast between the Forth and the Tees, driving back the natives into Strathclyde, after a struggle which lasted for many years. Among them came Ida the son of Eoppa, with twelve sons, in forty dragon ships full of English warriors. He founded the castle of Bambrough on the coast, which was at first surrounded with a hedge and afterwards with a wall; and in 547 A.D. he became king of the country of Bernicia, between the Forth and the Tees. Ida was surnamed the "Flame-bearer." He reigned for twelve years in Bernicia, when Ethelric his son succeeded him.

Many more warriors landed on the coast between the Tees and the Humber; and in 559 A.D. their Eolderman, named Ella, the son of Iffi, the son of Wuscfrea, and twelfth in descent from Woden, became king of the more southern Northumbrian kingdom of Deira.

When they were settled in their kingdom of Deira, with Ella as their king, and Elfric his brother as their leader in war, the sea-rovers

became farmers, ready to defend their possessions and to fight for the acquisition of more territory for their countrymen. They were the ceorls or freemen assembling in communities of families, within a boundary or mark, and known by a common name with the addition of the patronymic *ing*. The ceorl owned a hide of land, bore arms, had a vote, and took part in the *thing*, or general assembly of his mark. The union of marks formed a wapentake (Vopnatak), from the custom of touching the chief's spear in token of fealty. The union of Wapentakes formed the Scire or Shire with its Shire-mót. The Ceorl was the freeman, while the Eorl was the nobleman or chief in peace and war, and the Eolderman was a prince of the family of the Cyning (from *cyne*, generous) or king, who wore the *cynehelm* or circlet of gold.

The Englishmen came with their immemorial gods, and their grand old traditions. Woden was their All-father and Creator, Thor the mighty enemy of giants and trolls, Tyr the god of war. They invoked Balder the bright and fair of aspect; Freyr, who presided over rain and sunshine; Niord, who

ruled the winds; Ægir, god of the ocean; and many more. "Our forefathers derived comfort in affliction, support in difficulty, from the belief that the gods watched over them. They bent in gratitude for the blessings they conferred, and were guided and directed in the daily business of life by the conviction of their responsibility to higher powers than any which they recognised in the world around them." A religious feeling was the basis of their respect for law—of their loyalty, of their free institutions, and of those customs and habits of thought which were the foundation-stones of the edifice of English liberty. These old warriors brought with them to their new homes all those germs which were fertilised by their virtues, and watered with the life-blood of their valour, until, in the course of centuries, they grew up to form the greatest nation this earth has ever seen, a fruitful and beneficent tree, spreading its branches far and wide round the world.

It was, in all probability, not Ella and Elfric, nor their war-comrades Seomel and Brand, Vidfinn and Guthlaf, who first crossed the sea from Angeln; for it must have

taken two or three generations to establish the English firmly in Northumbria, and their grandfathers were the original invaders. They found the country desolate, and for the most part waste. The Roman roads traversed the moors and forests, and formed causeways over the swamps, but the stations were abandoned and ruinous. There was scarcely any cultivation. Vast tracts were covered with forests, the haunts of wild cattle and red-deer, of boars and badgers, of wolves and wild-cats. It was in truth the "*Deira*," or land of wild animals. The ponds and marshes were frequented by myriads of wild-fowl, and few had ever penetrated into the hidden recesses of the wildernesses. By very slow degrees, amidst wars and disturbance, the English began to change the whole face of the country. The first beginnings were in the days of Ella and Elfric, when defensible homesteads were built, land was apportioned, and laws began to be obeyed.

On the death of Ella in 588 his son Edwin fled before Ethelric King of Bernicia, who conquered Deira, but, after the death of Ethelric, Edwin took heart and not only

reconquered his own kingdom of Deira but Bernicia also, and united them both in one great kingdom of Northumbria.

The history of the early struggles into existence of any of the peoples who, in later centuries, have formed the nations of modern Europe is unfortunately so obscure that it can only furnish us with a mere general outline of the course of events.

Occasionally, however, the record of a short period is found, like an oasis in a desert, which is full of most interesting details. The welcome narrative abruptly begins, and as suddenly ends, pleasing the reader with anecdotes, speeches, estimates of character, and other precious materials for history. There is a very remarkable example of this in Bede's invaluable work. Nothing can be more tantalising than the extremely meagre character of the accounts that have been preserved of the leaders of the people, the makers of England, as Mr. Green called them, during the Heptarchy, the all-important period when England was made. But there is one striking exception. When the venerable monk of Jarrow reaches the period of Edwin of North-

umbria his narrative somehow has fresh life and vigour breathed into it, and the following half-century receives the same welcome treatment. We see real progress being made in the civilisation of the country and the condition of the people, which, though checked, was not put a stop to even by the desolating invasions of Penda and Cadwalla.

One eagerly looks for the causes both of the increased life in Bede's narrative and of this remarkable period of sudden progress. The full details furnished for Edwin's history are so exceptional that the circumstance was discussed by Dr. Giles, the editor of Bohn's edition of Bede. He considers it to be clear that Bede must have had access to highly valuable materials, for his details are too minute in themselves and too accurately defined to have been derived by him from tradition only.

The phenomena of the history of Edwin's reign are, however, far more interesting than any question relating to Bede's materials. We find a man who had passed his life in exile, and under every disadvantage, suddenly developing into a most efficient ruler and giving vigour and direction to every branch of his adminis-

tration. But this is not all. He is found assuming ensigns of sovereignty, adopting measures and undertaking expeditions of a character not at all in accordance with what could possibly be expected from a sovereign of any state in the English Heptarchy of that period.

There is one natural way of accounting for the various problems connected with Edwin's life-story, and especially with his reign. The presence of a bigoted and very timid Roman monk, like Paulinus, in attendance on his Queen, will in no way explain them. Edwin caused a chronicle of his labours to be written; he assumed ensigns only known at the court of the Emperor; he provided for the convenience of travellers in a way only practised in the East; he equipped a fleet for the subjugation of distant islands; he established order in a way so effectual that no organisation known in the England of the seventh century could have enforced it.

Edwin was a man of great ability, it must be conceded, but this will not account for the introduction of measures so at variance with the ideas and habits of the governments of

the Heptarchy at that time. One explanation covers all the ground. It is quite possible that, owing to a very extraordinary combination of circumstances, certain countrymen of Edwin may have had rare opportunities of visiting the distant regions of the then known world, of studying many things in many climes, and that, after years of absence, they may have returned home. Surrounded by such men as his friends and ministers, the history of his reign is made perfectly clear. A hint here and there even enables us to guess who some of these great men were. History, in that age, usually gives us a mere skeleton. Bede, fortunately, in the case of the illustrious Northumbrian Bretwalda and his people, gives us much more, but not nearly enough. Following the venerable historian closely and exactly, it is not an unworthy aspiration to fill up the blanks, and to present these workers in the making of England as living and moving beings. Even we, at this distance of time, may owe them something. All the seeds that they scattered so perseveringly and so earnestly, and with such loving care for their country and its welfare, cannot have

fallen among thorns or on rocky ground. It is such considerations which have given rise to this attempt to tell the strange and romantic story of the Paladins of King Edwin the Great.

C. R. M.

PART 1

HOME

CHAPTER I

STILLINGFLEET

The sacred ash tree spread its wide leafy branches over the court of the Stillingas. On one side of this court was the long hall, built of timber, with quaintly-carved joists and gables, on two others were the barns and cattle-sheds, the whole being surrounded by a stiff quickset hedge concealing the view of the open country. This ash was not only sacred from its size and antiquity, and as an emblem of the ash tree of *Yggdrasil*, but it also had an elf hole through which children could be passed, a peculiarity possessed by no other ash for miles around. Six children were dancing joyously round the tree one bright summer afternoon 1300 years ago, and making the whole place resound with merry laughter. The eldest was twelve years of age, a sturdy, straight-limbed boy named Coelred, the

eldest son of Seomel, the warrior chief of the Stillingas. He had blue eyes and a sun-burnt little face, with masses of brown hair falling over his shoulders. His brother Porlor, two years his junior, was a bright child with a dreamy, thoughtful look in his eyes when at rest, and a strong little frame fit for sustained work even at that early age. Their companion, Hereric, numbering the same years as Porlor, was an inch taller, and his hair was golden and glistened as the sun's rays rested on it. He was a young prince, son of the warrior Elfric, the brother of Ella the king of Deira. His little brother Osric was only three years of age. The four boys had two girls for playfellows—Bergliot, the golden-haired princess, aged six years, and Braga, or Bragaswith, the little sister of Coelred and Porlor. Ella, the king, lived at Aldby with his queen and his daughter, the princess Alca, aged sixteen, and the new-born prince Edwin, the hope of Deira. Elfric was established at the Aldwark, the remains of the imperial palace within the walls of Eburacum, or Eoforwic (York), as the English then called it. But he was a widower,

DANCING ROUND THE SACRED ASH

and his children were generally at Stillingfleet, under the care of the gentle wife of Seomel, the British lady Volisia. Elfric himself was also a frequent visitor, to consult with Seomel, his friend and companion in arms, over the affairs of the frontier.

On that bright summer afternoon the Lady Volisia sat on a bench by the carved door-post of the hall, her baby-girl Nanna asleep by her side. She was tall and slim, with a slightly aquiline nose and soft brown eyes. She watched the happy group round the ash tree, a gentle smile lighting up her face as she bent again over her work. It consisted of a bright-coloured scarf to which she was attaching tassels. Presently the children left off dancing and began passing each other through the elf hole. It was said to bring luck, but it was too rough a game for the little ones, so the lady called the children to come round her, and told them that they should play the chance game for the scarf. This was one of the most ancient of all Teutonic games. Every child held the edge of the scarf with both hands. One was chosen to say a well-known spell, touching a hand at each word, and the

hand on which the last word fell was dropped out. The spell was then repeated as often as necessary, and the owner of the last hand left won the game. Twelve small hands held the scarf, and the Princess Bergliot said the spell.

Thus it ran :

Hurli Burli *Scipa Hwede*
Blypan Trothorn *Gang Feran*
Eastor Gasta *Ut.*

The final "*ut*" came to Hereric the Atheling, but he presented the scarf, with all the ardour of a lover of ten years old, to his little playmate Braga. At the moment that the happy and smiling child received it, a horn was heard in the distance, and all ran at full speed to the gateway left in the line of the defensive hedge. Coelred, the eldest, was allowed to rush on, but the rest were called back by Volisia to await the arrivals within the courtyard.

The view outside the surrounding hedge showed that the home of Seomel, the chief of the Stillingas, stood on the edge of a ridge running east and west, with a stream flowing through the valley below. The homesteads of the Stillingas, each with some tillage and

pasturage round it, were built at intervals on either side of the stream, just clear of the highest flood. But beyond the narrow valley the whole landscape consisted of one dense forest. The ridge was chiefly wooded with ash trees, whence the name of Escrick (or Ashridge) for its more eastern part, and a short steep hill led down from the gateway of the Stillingfleet to the margin of the brook.

Coelred ran down the hill, and his bare legs and feet carried him through the water and up the opposite side, just as the cavalcade emerged from the forest. It consisted of Elfric the Atheling; Seomel, the chief of the Stillingas; Guthlaf, the chief of the Hemingas; the Princess Alca, a young girl numbering sixteen summers, with her women; the gleeman Coifi; and a following of warriors returning from a short campaign against their northern neighbours of Bernicia. It is not certain whether the ladies rode as is now the fashion. Some people maintain that the Lady Wake, grandmother of the Fair Maid of Kent, was the first Englishwoman who used a side-saddle, 800 years afterwards. Others consider that the question is unsettled. At all events, while

Guthlaf took his leave and rode on to his more distant home with his followers, and the Stillinga folk made for their homesteads in the valley, the rest cantered up the hill and dismounted in the courtyard, where they were warmly greeted by Volisia and the children. Coelred ran like a young deer by his father's horse, and it was his proud privilege to assist the Lady Alca to dismount.

Elfric and Seomel were men of gigantic proportions, tall, sinewy, and well knit, with blonde beards and fair hair flowing over their shoulders, and of the same height. They wore over their linen tunics leathern shirts with iron scales or rings sewn upon them in rows, over which were metal collars. Their hose were blue, cross-gartered from ankle to knee with strips of leather, and their shoes had an opening down the instep tied close with thongs. On their left sides hung long single-edged iron swords, with hilts wrought of silver and bronze and scored with mystic runes, in wooden scabbards tipped and edged with bronze. Short daggers, called *seax*, were suspended from their girdles on the right side. The small round war-boards or shields, with

an iron boss, were slung over their backs, and in their hands were the long ashen spears. Their helmets were of leather bound with iron and crested with iron-wrought figures of wild boars with eyes of brass. Over their armoured shirts they wore embroidered cloaks of blue cloth, fastened on their shoulders with a golden and jewelled buckle. Coifi, the gleeman, was in less warlike guise. He wore a garment with tight sleeves and embroidered breast, not unlike a smock-frock, with a hood attached, his feet and legs being cross-gartered, while a small harp was suspended round his neck and hung at his left side.

The return from a warlike expedition was usually the occasion for a feast in the hall of the chief. It was so in this instance. As the sun went down Alca and the children retired to rest in the inner rooms, while the servants prepared the meal. In the centre of the long hall was the hearth-fire, with a hole in the roof for smoke; but now it was covered with green boughs, and on either side of it the boards were fixed on trestles. The freemen, or *ceorls*, of the Stillingas and of the Atheling almost filled the great room, seated in rows on the

benches or settles, while the Prince and Seomel, with his wife, took their places at the head of the upper board. Our English ancestors were very clean, the use of baths was general, and before the Stillingas sat down to meat water was brought them for hands and feet. The fare was good and plentiful, meat being handed round on spits, while the horns were filled with ale, and the warriors talked in groups over the events of the campaign. But it was not until the Lady Volisia had herself handed round the brimming mead-cups to her guests and had retired, that the harp and song were called for. Then all eyes turned to the famous gleeman who had arrived in the Atheling's train from York. No man in the kingdom came near him for depth of knowledge of the ancient religion or of the folk-lore of the English. He stood by the chiefs at the upper end of the hall and tuned the harp as the mead-cup circulated.

Coifi sang that thrilling legend which never failed to arouse the enthusiasm of his countrymen, and which was peculiarly appropriate after an expedition which had for its object the rescue of a Deiran town from a Bernician invasion. He told how the hero Beowulf came

to Heorot with a chosen band, to rescue the subjects of King Hrothgar from the cruelties of their fiendish enemy Grendel; how Beowulf, single-handed, tore the monster's arm from his shoulder; how he then overcame Grendel's mother at the bottom of the sea with the aid of the sword Hrunting; and how he returned home victorious after this dread encounter. The touches of nature in the descriptions of scenery, the exciting speeches and challenges, the warlike sentiments, went right home to the hearts of his hearers, and loud and long was the applause at the conclusion of each fytte or canto, when the mead-cup passed round, and Coifi paused for breath.

> And here the singer for his art
> Not all in vain may plead:
> The song that nerves a nation's heart
> Is in itself a deed.

At length the long but inspiriting song was ended. Seomel and the Atheling retired, the Stillingas went to their homes, while straw was shaken down along the hall, behind the mead-benches, as beds for the strangers. An eventful day thus ended, and all was silence in the courts of Seomel.

CHAPTER II

ALCA

Alca was the most beautiful girl that her countrymen had ever beheld; and even then, at the early age of sixteen years, as she tripped out into the crowded court, she appeared to the beholders to be a perfect dream of loveliness, lithe and active, yet with the graceful dignity of a long-descended princess. Her hair was golden, her eyes a deep sapphire blue, with that calm depth of meaning which was then believed to be one attribute of an elf-maiden. Alca, from a young child, had been remarkable for the universality of her love, which was extended to all the gods had made. Her wisdom and knowledge were far beyond her years, and seemed to those around her to be miraculous. She saw the true meanings of beliefs and customs. She alone was able to extract the hidden truth from the

mysteries of nature, and could understand those longings and aspirations which her companions could only dimly shadow forth by their creeds and their superstitions. All loved the Princess, but they looked upon her as one nearer to gods than to men ; and only children dared to love her without awe, and as a being higher and wiser, but still one of themselves. For the rest of the world Alca was an elf-maiden endowed with special gifts by the gods.

The Princess had accompanied her uncle to Stillingfleet to see her cousins and other young friends, and to visit the Lady Volisia, to whom she was warmly attached. On that summer morning she was to go with her friend to the shrine of a goddess of her people on the other side of the Ouse, attended by the children and by several servants. When they reached the bank it was high tide. A large flat-bottomed boat was run into the water, and the party was pulled across by the boys to an old Roman fort on the opposite side, called Acaster. It consisted of two towers, like those on the column of Trajan, surrounded by a ditch. It was on the verge

of a dense forest, in which some clearings had been made. The whole tract forming the angle between the Ouse and Wharfe was forest-clad, except where clearings had been made for planting apple and other fruit trees, and where the *ings* or swampy meadows formed a fringe between the forest and the river banks. The pilgrims made their way through the thickets by a very narrow path without stopping, for the promised visit to the orchards was to be on their return, after their devotions had been duly paid to the goddess.

Nehalennia, to whose worship the wife of Seomel had remained faithful, was a Celtic goddess, who presided over fertility, and especially over fruit trees, and who was also the goddess of chalk pits and the patroness of chalk workers. The temple or *haruc* (*Hörgr*), as the English called it, was unbuilt by human hands. The deity dwelt in a shady spot, embowered and shut in by self-grown trees, veiling her form in the rustling foliage of the overhanging boughs. Here, just within the forest, but bordering on the bright expanse of *ings*, stood a large slab of lime-

stone, on which was carved in relief an image of Nehalennia, with long flowing hair, and baskets full of apples by her side. Masses of elecampane (*Inula Helenium*) and of other medicinal plants grew round the base of the carved stone, and a solemn silence reigned around. A few rays of the mid-day sun found their way through the overhanging branches, and lighted up the bas-relief, carved by some well-trained Roman hand. The Lady Volisia, the Princess Alca, and the children made their offerings to the shrine, and continued kneeling in devotion for some time. It was the very spot on which the Cistercian nunnery of Appleton was erected 600 years afterwards.

The party made their way through the dense forest from the shrine of Nehalennia to the orchards of Appleton, which supplied Stillingfleet and all the homesteads round York. Here they rested under the apple trees, eating the rosy fruit, while Alca talked to the children. Porlor had asked her why Nehalennia was not also a goddess of the English, and she answered in the way which would make the essence of such

mysteries most clear to her companions. "The names only are different," she said, "the deity is the same. Your mother and her people pray for fertility to Nehalennia, and you and Coelred and your sisters should do likewise, because invocation of the same name is one more tie of love between mother and children. Your father's people invoke Freyr to send them rain and sunshine, and to give them the fruits of the earth in due season. But it is the same thing. Both are names to denote the beneficent goodness of the 'All-father,' he whom the English call Woden. Remember that whatever god we invoke, we are always praying, through one of his attributes, to the 'All-father.'

"Woden has many names," she exclaimed in a voice which awed her companions, and with a rapt look, as if gazing through space and seeing what was not visible to them. "He is the God and Father of victory, the Giver of gifts, the Almighty and All-knowing, but always the Father and Creator of gods and men. Sitting on his throne *hlidskialf* he can survey the whole world, and can hear all that goes on among

men. His spear *gûnguir* is in his hand; his ravens, *Huginn* and *Muninn*, are on his shoulders; his wolves, *Geri* and *Freki*, are at his feet; his horse *Sleipnir* by his side. He too is the Father of the slain, and the Rewarder of the brave and good when this life is ended." After a pause her eyes lost that far-away look, and were full of love as she turned to the children, and promised to tell them the meaning of all these things as soon as they were old enough to understand. Coelred, who had been eagerly listening to all the Princess had said, now anxiously inquired about the slain, and about the fatherhood of Woden in regard to them. "In three years," he said, "I shall be girded with a sword, and shall take my place in battle by the side of my father Seomel. How soon after that will Woden choose me to be one of the slain: are the bravest taken first, or the youngest, or those who are of least service? Can the Princess tell me?" Alca replied, as they wended their way home — "Of that hour it is given to none to tell. Woden sends his wish-maidens, called Valkyrie, who fly through the air to choose the

heroes that are to fall. Often the best and bravest are taken, sometimes the very young, sometimes a warrior waits long and fights in many battles before his turn comes. No good warrior fears the Valkyrie. They are to be loved, not feared. They hover over the conflicting armies, mingle in the ranks, take the slain in their embraces, and ride with them on their heavenly horses to Valhalla, where they attend at the feasts, and hand the drinking-horn to gods and heroes. But touching the hour of death nothing can be known, because the selection is made on the spot by the Valkyrie. The time we cannot know." Then she turned with a sweet smile, and, looking from one to the other, she said to the two boys, "Yet this I do know, for it is given to me to know. When the fulness of time arrives, Coelred and Porlor will fall in battle, fighting bravely in a righteous cause."

The boys were deeply impressed. Their hearts were too full for words, and there was silence until they reached the old Roman tower at Acaster and had crossed the river. It was broken by Porlor, who asked if the

Valkyrie could be seen. "No," replied Alca, "they are unseen in battle; for, like Woden and the Valhalla, they are a mystery, which it is given to few to understand." "But," persisted Porlor, "cannot they put on the *alptahamir* (swan shifts), and take the form of birds of augury? Our friend Oswith, the son of Guthlaf, told us that he saw three swans alight on Derwent bank, put their white swan shifts in the grass, and turn into beautiful maidens. They bathed in the river, resumed their shifts, and flew away again as swans; and Oswith never lies. Were they Valkyrie?" Alca answered that "it was given to some to behold these mysteries, and to understand the truth that lies concealed in them, but to others it was not given." They were now approaching the gate of Stillingfleet as the sun set, the faithful dog Shuprak bounded out to meet them, and the conversation turned to trivial subjects as they entered the court.

Some days afterwards the three boys, Hereric, Coelred, and Porlor, with their dog Shuprak, set out for the burg of the Hemingas, to join their friend Oswith, the son of

Guthlaf, on a hunting expedition. They wore cross-gartered hose, and belts with metal buckles, from which long hunting-knives were suspended; bows and arrows were slung on their backs, and the little fellows also carried short iron-headed spears. For several miles they made their way through the dense forest, until they emerged on Skipwith Common, where the ruins of an abandoned town of the Parisi, consisting of circular huts, still showed many traces. It was a weird and desolate place even in bright sunshine, and Porlor whispered to his companions tales of grey old wood-folk clothed in moss, of dwarfs and giants, and of the lubber fiend, as they hurried across the moor, and again plunged into the forest. They went swiftly over the ground, and soon reached the clearings and the fortified burg of the Hemingas, at the junction of the rivers Ouse and Derwent. Here there was a ruined fort built by the Romans, which had been repaired with timber, and was the home of Guthlaf, the chief of the Hemingas. His son Oswith was the same age as Coelred, straight as a dart, broad-chested and lean-flanked—a splendid speci-

men of a young Englishman. He was a fast friend of the sons of Seomel, and, after warm words of welcome, their first act was to challenge each other to fight. A wrestling-match at once commenced on the green, and the lithe and sinewy figures of Coelred and Oswith were soon entwined, as they strove, with every muscle at extreme tension, to throw each other to the ground. Each boy won a bout, which made them quite happy, and the four lads, after a merry meal, set out on their search for forest game, working northwards again towards the home of Seomel.

"Nature was an open book to these lads of the far-distant past. They lived in nearer communion than we can do with the world around them. Their frames, not yet clogged and vitiated by the habits of an advanced civilisation, were more alive than ours to the external effects of natural causes. The birds spoke to them, the forest whispered to them, the wind wantoned with their curly locks, they stood before the great spirit of nature face to face, and knew him as he revealed himself in every one of his divine forms." Loaded with as much game as they

could carry, after a very successful and very happy day, they were walking in single file through the tangled underwood, when Oswith, their leader, saw the eyes of a huge wild-cat glaring at him through the dense foliage. It sprang up a tree, and in an instant he had thrown down his burden and was after it, with his long knife in his mouth. When, at a considerable height, he was swinging himself forward to attack his antagonist, which was at bay, the bough broke and he fell heavily to the ground. His comrades found him suffering intense pain, unable to stand, and with a very badly sprained ankle. Abandoning the spoils of the chase, Coelred and Porlor began to carry him, but they were still several miles from Stillingfleet. Hereric ran forward for help, and when it came the sturdy little fellows had already carried their friend upwards of three miles. Oswith was soon lying on a heap of fresh straw in Seomel's hall. His hose and shoes were removed, and it was found that the ankle was much swollen, so that there was every prospect of days and even weeks elapsing before he would be able to walk.

As soon as Coelred had seen that everything

that was possible had been done for his friend, he sought his mother's bower, and throwing himself at the feet of Alca, he besought her to show favour to the son of Guthlaf. "Indeed," replied the Princess, "I will do what I can for my young friend Oswith." She went into the hall, patted the boy's head, and spoke cheering words to him, with her eyes fixed on his until she thought her spell would work. Then she removed the bandage, placed her hand very gently on the swelling, and uttered it, as follows :—

Ben zi Bena,
Bluot zi Bluode,
Lid zi Geliden,
Sose gelimida sin.
Thu biguolen Wodin,
So he wola coude,
Sôse ben-renki,
Sôse bluot-renki,
Sôse lidere-renki.

Volisia stood by her side, ready to administer a sleeping-draught, and next morning Oswith was quite healed, and able to walk and run as well as ever. As soon as she saw that the spell was working, Alca went out to the ash tree in the courtyard and prayed to the Æsir

on her knees, several groups of people watching her with awe. When she rose and looked round, Coifi came forward with a low obeisance. The gleeman was an adept in the Teutonic religious beliefs, and was versed in all the tales and traditions of the mythology of his people. But he looked upon them solely from a practical point of view. He received every supernatural story literally. To him Woden and Thor were the wooden images preserved at Godmundham, and he sought for no further light. Alca, even in extreme youth, was visionary in her religious views. The All-father, as she understood him, was everywhere and pervaded everything. The gods and goddesses were his attributes, or represented his intentions and designs, as she had explained to the children on the day of the pilgrimage to Nehalennia's shrine.

"The spell will not work, I fear, O daughter of the King," said Coifi, who was then a man between thirty and forty, and known in every burg and hall as the best gleeman in Deira. "The spell will work, Coifi," replied Alca in a gentle voice. After a pause the gleeman said almost in a whisper, "I know the spell of Balder's horse that you used for young

Oswith. I think I know every spell, but they will not work for me. I pray and sacrifice to the gods, but they help me not. Let them give me power and I can believe them. I believe when I see." Alca looked at him and said, "I am too young to teach so learned a man as Coifi. But I can say why the spell will work. The boy loved me and believed. I love the gods and have faith, so the spell will work." Coifi replied, "But I cannot believe until I see the spell work. If the spell works I believe." "That is the wrong way, Coifi," said the Princess. "Believe and the spell works; for it works by faith. Wait until the spell works before you can believe, and it will never work." Puzzled and angry, Coifi declared that he would serve the gods and pray to them for his lifetime, and they must answer him and give him power; but that to believe before they showed him their mighty works was impossible. Alca shook her head. She said no more, but she saw that insight was not given to Coifi.

As she stood by the side of the gleeman, with Coelred and Porlor watching her from the hall entrance, and with many people in the

courtyard, her aspect suddenly changed. She assumed a listening attitude and then looked upwards. "The Valkyrie pass through the air," she cried. "I neither see nor hear," said Coifi; "it cannot be." All gazed in amazement for several minutes. "A great battle is joined. The heroes fall," was the next exclamation of the Princess. She stood like one inspired. "Coelred! Coelred! run to my eame the Atheling and to your father; tell them to arm and to assemble all their forces, for the enemy approaches. Coifi, go thou to alarm the people. Bid them to assemble armed and ready to march." Coelred was off like an arrow from a bow. Coifi also obeyed. The alarm-horns were heard in the valley. In half an hour the Stillingas were drawn up fully armed outside the hedge. Elfric and Seomel, also fully armed, had entered the enclosure and asked eagerly for the cause of the alarm. Alca was still standing under the ash tree. All eyes were turned on her. The setting sun threw a glow of light over her form. "I hear the rapid feet of the messenger," she said, raising one arm. "You will hear him and act quickly. He comes—make way for him." A lane was

formed, and between the two lines of warriors a little boy ran breathless into the court, and sank exhausted on the ground. "It is Forthere, the son of Brand of Ulfskelf," exclaimed Seomel. "Speak, boy! speak quickly—what are your tidings."

The gallant little fellow had swum across the river. As soon as he recovered breath he delivered his message. The settlement at Bilbrough had been suddenly attacked and taken by an overwhelming force of Britons from Elmet, led by their king Certicus. After a short fight the slaughter began. Vidfinn, the chief of the Billingas, was slain, and most of his people were massacred. Neither age nor sex was spared. A young woman with little Sivel, the child of Vidfinn, brought the news to Ulfskelf. But there was scarcely breathing-time before the enemy appeared, their numbers vastly increased; Ulfskelf was surrounded, and Brand resolved to defend it to the last gasp. A desperate fight took place outside, but the overwhelming numbers of the enemy soon obliged him to retreat behind his palisades. Forthere had escaped by creeping along the margin of the Wharfe. He then

swam across the Ouse, and so brought the tidings to Stillingfleet.

Elfric and his leading men assembled under the ash tree and issued orders. It was a bright moonlight night. A party had already been sent off to prepare the boats for crossing the Ouse. Mounted messengers were despatched to Cuthred, chief of the Poclingas beyond the Derwent, to Sigfrid of the Elfingas, to Guthlaf of the Hemingas, to Ingeld of the Heslingas, calling upon them to march with all despatch and meet Elfric the Atheling at Acaster. The first object was to save Ulfskelf, if Brand could hold out so long. Elfric was despatching another messenger to the King, who was at Aldby, with a similar request. But Alca spoke once more. She advised that King Ella should be asked to cross the Ouse with his fighting men, above York, advance along the high land by the hill of Severus and the ridge of Askham, and so take the enemy in flank; while Elfric with his levies, raised between Ouse and Derwent, opposed their further advance.

Stillingfleet was no longer safe. It was arranged that next morning the Princess Alca

and the Lady Volisia, escorted by Coifi and the boys, with a few attendants, should take refuge at Aldby. Meanwhile Elfric and Seomel, with the Stillingas and the Atheling's own followers, crossed the Ouse and began to entrench themselves at Acaster in the early hours of the night. When the reinforcements arrived next day, they would boldly advance to the relief of Ulfskelf.

CHAPTER III

ALDBY

The escort of the Princess, of Volisia, and the children left Stillingfleet next morning. In the van rode the older boys, Oswith, Coelred, and Forthere, all three well armed, followed by the two ladies, the children, and attendants, while Coifi, with the two younger boys, Porlor and Hereric, brought up the rear. "The gleeman is to be a priest of Woden," said Porlor to his friend, "to whom it is not permitted to carry arms. The defence of the rear depends upon us, so we must be on our guard." All the lads had arms suited to their size, but none of them were yet old enough to wear swords.

After a mile's ride through the forest, they came to open moorland where there was an outlying stockaded post of the Stillingas, afterwards called Moreby; and here they met the Heslingas, led by the veteran Ingeld, to

whom the Princess gave fuller information than had been brought by the messenger, and he pushed rapidly onwards with his men, to join the Atheling. Riding on over moor and through forest, the ladies and their escort, after some hours, reached the banks of the bright river Derwent, where tall ash trees threw shadows over its surface, which was skimmed by water-hens, while now and then the brilliant plumage of the kingfisher glistened under the sun's rays as it darted to its galleried nest in the bank. Soon the party came in sight of Aldby, the royal seat of the kings of Deira, on a slight eminence above the right bank of the river, the buildings appearing amongst clumps of tall trees.

The Roman station of Derventio, on the Derwent, was twelve miles east of York. When the English arrived, the buildings had been much injured by invaders from the north, and by more than a century of neglect. They were in a ruinous condition, but they were still standing; and they received the name of Aldby, or the ancient town, from the new-comers. The prætorium, repaired in many places with timber, still had a portico

composed of pillars with composite capitals, and formed the guest-hall of the King of Deira. A villa, consisting of rooms built round three sides of a square, with corridors, and a temple, were also included in the Deiran palace. The walls of the guest-hall were adorned with tapestry representing mythical beings from the Teutonic mythology, and the floor retained its mosaic pavement. Although the boards or tables were on movable trestles, there were fixed sideboards, with bowls of bronze highly gilt and of very elegant forms, metal dishes, and horns, while a raised dais with a throne at one end gave some appearance of regal dignity to the spacious hall.

King Ella had marched away with a large force, but its place had been taken by warriors from Driffield and from Godmundham, and Aldby still had the busy appearance of a royal abode, with yards and halls crowded with armed men, priests, and servants. The fugitives were cordially received by Ella's queen, the stepmother of the Princess Alca, whose name is not recorded in history. She had recently given birth to a son, who had received the name of Edwin, a child of destiny, round

whose life-story the events of this narrative will eventually centre. The children were all eager to pay their respects to the young Atheling, the hope of the house of Deira, and Alca led them into the presence of the infant prince.

There was much anxiety for several days, but at last the news came that Elfric had relieved Ulfskelf and defeated the numerous but ill-disciplined army of Britons. Their chief Certicus and his levies commenced a retreat which the King converted into a rout when he fell upon their right flank in the swampy ground between Askham and Bilbrough. Ella and his brother then formed a junction round the hill, now called Ingrish, and again fell furiously upon the disorganised rabble. Certicus, with a small following, escaped into the forests of Elmet, but there was tremendous slaughter, and the place is called Helagh to this day. The English outposts were again extended to the old Roman station of Calcaria, on the south side of the river Wharfe, facing the ford of Nehalennia. The King also restored the burg of the Billingas, and all due honours were paid

to the remains of the chief Vidfinn, who had been a daring Viking before he established himself at Bilbrough with his children Hjuk and Bil. Nine votive boats of pure gold were deposited in his grave, and a lofty tumulus was raised above it, on the slope of the red sandstone hill which rises gradually from the Roman road between York and Tadcaster. Little Sivel, the only surviving child of Vidfinn, was adopted by Brand of Ulfskelf. A nephew of Vidfinn, named Saebald, surnamed Fairfax from his silver-white hair, was elected to command the Billingas and to defend the restored settlement of Bilbrough.

These administrative arrangements occupied some time, during which the lads at Aldby hunted in the forests between the Derwent and the foot of the Wolds, sometimes pursuing their game far into the chalky hills, and often ascending Garraby, which rises to a height of nearly 800 feet above Aldby. Their evenings were passed in games with their sisters, or in conversations with Alca, varied by listening to the wondrous tales of Coifi or to the folk-lore of another race preserved in the memory of their mother Volisia.

One day the five boys went with Coifi to Godmundham to visit the temple which contains the sacred images brought from the old home on the continent. A space was encircled by a quickset hedge, and within there were three lofty elms, under which the idols were set up. Hard by were the ruins of the Roman station of Delgovitia, some of the buildings having been roughly repaired to serve as dwellings for priests and servants. Coifi localised his beliefs. According to his creed, Woden and Thor were within this enclosure at Godmundham, or at all events he held that this was their favourite home, where worshippers must seek their help, and where priests must observe all the ceremonies connected with their cult. He told the boys the history of the creation, and all the strange legends which had gathered round it; and he narrated the myth of Balder's death and of Freyr's love for Gerdr. He attended the sacrifices of bullocks, and remained long at his devotions. But he never could derive either power or inspiration from his prayers to the gods, and he rose from them with an expression of discontent and impatience. The

boys were glad to return to Aldby, dissatisfied also, and eager for some more sympathetic teaching. This they found in the Princess Alca, who to them was the type of perfect beauty and goodness.

They had attended her on an excursion to the foot of the Wolds, and rested on a rising ground under the spreading branches of a tall ash tree, with Aldby in sight beyond the river, and a mass of waving foliage at their feet. The sun was still high, the stillness only broken by the songs of birds. Alca sat on one of the projecting roots. The boys were lying down at her feet, surrounded by leaves and flowers, which they had been collecting to decorate her bower. Porlor broke the silence by asking the Princess to teach them the story of Balder, and its meaning. "Porlor," she said, "was right to be the spokesman, for his name should make him a student of Balder's lore. But I see by your eyes," she added, "that you all wish me to talk to you of the Son of God. Listen, then, to one who seeks, though with little help and in twilight, to learn and to show to others the true meaning of hidden mysteries. Balder

PRINCESS ALCA TELLING STORIES TO THE BOYS

was the son of the All-father, of the Creator of gods and men. He was the god of light, and grace, and manly beauty. His brow was white as the chamomile flower. Through him deeds of true bravery were done on the earth, the weak were protected, virtue was practised, and justice was maintained. But a prophecy that Balder would perish afflicted the gods. Then Frigga, the spouse of Woden, took an oath from all created nature that no individual thing would harm the pride of Asgard, the beloved of gods and men. But the goddess made a fatal omission. She forgot a sprig of mistletoe. Being invulnerable, Balder allowed the gods to use him as a target. Now Loki, as you know, was born among the yotuns. He was false and full of wickedness, father of the terrible wolf Fenris and of Hela, ruler of the dead. Loki put mistletoe into the hands of the blind god Haudr, and with this he slew the best and greatest of Woden's sons, who descended into hell. The All-father himself went down into the dark abode of Hela, to persuade her to relinquish her prey. She agreed, if all created nature would weep for Balder. All nature did mourn

for the loss of the god of goodness and beauty, save one old crone. 'What have the gods done for me,' she said, 'that I should weep for Balder? Let Hela keep her dead.' Thus Balder's fate was sealed, and with it the fate of the world; for justice, mercy, virtue, and true bravery ceased to prevail with Balder's death, though they did not entirely cease to exist. I know not why the All-father, in his wisdom, has submitted to this evil. But it can only be for a time. The Son of God will rise again in triumph. I sometimes think that he has risen, though as yet we know it not." Then the far-off look came again into Alca's blue eyes, and during the rest of her speech she gazed into the heavens. The boys listened almost breathless.

"I think that God has risen to redeem the world," she resumed. "I am impelled to this belief, though I know not why, or by what guiding power. But misfortune and sorrow will not end — not yet. Coelred, Hereric, Oswith, Forthere, Porlor, I love you as very dear brothers. It is perhaps by reason of my love that insight is given to me. There is borne into my mind a feeling

that some great calamity is impending over you all, and that it will fall upon you together. In this there is a ray of comfort." She paused, and Coelred said, "If misfortune overtakes us, O Princess, we will strive to meet it as Englishmen, as sons of our brave fathers, ever victorious in battle!" "And," said Oswith, "in all our troubles we will ever remember the goodness of our beloved Princess." Forthere spoke words like those of Coelred, which were echoed by the younger boys.

"Of that I am certain," continued Alca. "You will quit yourselves like men—above all, like Englishmen. If you are together in your trials, Coelred will be your leader. The fearless Oswith will be your support, and will help to form your plans. Forthere, too, will be a trusty friend. Porlor will be most shrewd as an adviser, and his rede should be followed; and my sweet cousin Hereric will enlighten counsels by his imagination. O my boys! remember that if sorrow comes, Alca is praying for you and thinking of you. Always act as if the Son of God had risen. Be brave. Love one another. Love truth. Be just and merciful. If you hear that God has truly

risen, then remember my words. Be true to yourselves, and you will triumph in the end. May the gods watch over you!"

There was a long silence. Alca rose and turned homewards, surrounded by the boys with their sweet burdens. Anxious to turn their thoughts from the solemn and depressing theme on which she had been led to dwell for a time, by a force beyond her control, the Princess sang them a merry song, and talked to them of the return of their victorious fathers, which was expected on the following day. When the party reached Aldby all were chatting and romping, and the boys turned into an inner court to exercise themselves in feats of strength.

Next day the King arrived. Ella was a large man, like his brother, but he looked much older, worn with illness, and his expression was melancholy and somewhat stern. Elfric rode by his side, Seomel, Guthlaf, Brand, and the other chiefs followed, and there was a goodly array of English warriors. They dismounted at the Roman colonnade, and were soon surrounded by wives and children. The great feast that night in the old prætorium

was ordered and arranged like that of Seomel, but on a much larger and more regal scale. The Queen herself took round the mead-cup to the guests, and when she retired there were songs of victory, and the harp was passed from one to another. One warrior had recited the events of the campaign, and received great applause. Another told of the surprise of the Billingas by the cruel and treacherous Certicus. Late in the evening Coifi took the harp, and selected for his song the warning of Hrothgar to Beowulf on the frail tenure of human life. This choice was resented by some of those present as being intended to have reference to the King; but Ella himself approved, and the gleeman continued as follows:—

Soon will it be
That sickness or the sword
Shall part thee from power;
Or clutch of fire,
Or wave of flood,
Or gripe of sword,
Or javelin's flight,
Or ugly age,
Or glance of eye
Shall oppress and darken thee.

This melancholy dirge concluded the feast, and before another year had passed King Ella was in his grave.

The time of parting came only too soon. The Lady Volisia, with her daughters and the children of Elfric, returned to Stillingfleet. The Atheling himself, with Seomel, proceeded to York to make further preparations for strengthening the frontier posts, and it was arranged that Seomel should go thence, with supplies of weapons and stores, to Bilbrough, Calcaria, and Ulfskelf, before returning home. He was to take a large escort of Stillingas, and, to their great joy, the three elder boys and Porlor were to accompany him.

The Atheling and those who were to go with him to York took leave of the King and Queen. But when the boys came to say farewell to the Princess Alca their hearts were too full for words, and tears were in their eyes. They loved and worshipped her, they would all have died for her, but not a word could they say. She spoke very gently and calmly, repeating what she had said yesterday. "Remember my words. Be true to yourselves, and may the gods watch over you."

After the cavalcade started, the boys looked back again and again, waving their caps, until the graceful form under the colonnade was lost to sight. When would they see her again? Ah, when!

CHAPTER IV

YORK AND THE DEIRAN FRONTIER

Aberach, the British mound by the confluence of Ouse and Foss, was converted into the Roman camp of *Eburacum* by Agricola in A.D. 79, and from a camp became an imperial city, and the headquarters of the 6th Legion for nearly three centuries. The camp was surrounded by a ditch 9 feet deep and 32 wide, with an *agger* or rampart fortified by *valli*. The sides were 692 yards long, with four gates, and there was a space of about a hundred yards between the ditch and the river Ouse. But in A.D. 120 the Emperor Hadrian caused the *valli* to be replaced by substantial walls of alternate layers of bricks and masonry, with towers at the angles. The multangular tower at the north-west is still standing. The prætorium was converted into an imperial palace, and stood on the ground now occupied by gardens

on the south-east side of Goodramgate, and by Aldwark and Peterna. A temple of Bellona stood on the site of part of St. Mary's Abbey and the manor. Hyeronimianus of the 6th Legion had dedicated a temple to Serapis on the site of Fryar's Garden, and there was an artificial cave for the worship of Mithras on a site in Micklegate, opposite St. Martin's Church. The sites of other temples and theatres, which must have existed, are now unknown. The dense forest of Galtres came close up to the Prætorian gate, whence a road led to Isurium, and the Decumanian gate was in the centre of the opposite wall.

When the English arrived the 6th Legion had been gone for upwards of a century and a half, the place had been frequently pillaged, the walls were broken down in several places, and the beautiful Roman edifices were in ruins. King Ella had repaired the breaches in the walls with strong palisades, and his brother Elfric had made a portion of the imperial palace habitable.

Seomel and the four boys were the guests of the Atheling for a few days, while weapons were collected and got ready for the use of

the outposts beyond the Wharfe. The boys wandered about among the ruins, and gazed upon the porticoes and colonnades with awe and admiration. It was then that they first heard of the great emperors of Rome and of the Legions, and they understood dimly that their own people were only beginning to build up a new empire on the ruins of a glorious past. One day they had crossed the river Ouse to see the tombs which lined both sides of the Roman road leading to the south. Many were broken down, but some were still standing, especially on the higher ground. There was a beautiful monument on the Mount, where a youth and a maiden had been buried, for their figures were carved in relief on the stone, but of course the boys could not read the inscription. Here they rested, gazing over the swampy expanse of Knavesmire, and Porlor fancied that the two figures represented lovers who had been cut off in the flower of their youth. They were worshippers of Nehalennia; for a deity, like the one at Appleton, was carved in the semicircular space over their heads.

In running down the slope towards the river,

the boys stopped at the entrance of the cave of Mithras, and entered with feelings of curiosity mingled with awe. In the dim light they could see a bull on its knees, and a young man plunging a knife into its neck. "What can it mean? Is it a priest sacrificing a bullock to Woden?" said Oswith. "That cannot be," objected Coelred, "for the images were not made by our people, nor do we make images of the sacrificers but of the gods, and those only at Godmundham." Porlor sat long gazing at the fine bas-relief, on which a few rays from the sun cast a dim light. "The being with a high cap," he said, "is a god, not a man. I see by his face that he is a good god." His companions looked again more closely. "The god is plunging a knife into the bull, but it is not to do harm but good, for he is a good god." He again sat thinking. "It is a mystery," he said at last, "and we are too ignorant to solve it." "Alca would understand," said the other boys. They walked down to the river, and, crossing it, returned to the "Aldwark," as the ruined palace was then called.

Next day Seomel left York with a number

of laden horses, and a strong force as an escort. The four boys were with him. Again they passed the mysterious cave of Mithras, and the monument of the two lovers on the Mount, as they wended their way southward along the Roman road. These Roman roads in Britain were so admirably constructed that, although they had been neglected for more than a century, they were still serviceable. The mode of construction was as follows:—Two parallel furrows were dug to mark the width, and all loose earth was removed down to the rock. The first layer for the road was called the *pavimentum*. On it was laid a bed of small squared stones called *statumen*. The next layer consisted of a mass of small stones broken to pieces and mixed with lime, called *rudus* or *ruderatio*. The third layer, called *nucleus*, was a mixture of lime, chalk, broken tiles, all beaten together. On this was laid the *summum dorsum* or pavement of stones, sometimes like our paving-stones, but oftener of square flagstones. At proper intervals there were stations for changing horses, called *mutationes*, supplied with horses and *veredarii* or postilions, and in charge of stationmasters

called *statores*. The *miliaria* or milestones were perfect stone cylinders about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high, on bases.

The arrangements for travelling were out of gear, and most of the *mutationes* were in ruins or had been destroyed when King Ella reigned. But the splendid road was so admirably constructed that it was still efficient. Seomel had been delayed, and had not started until nearly sunset, but he made the best of his way, and reached the dwelling of Saebald the Fairfax, chief of the Billingas, long before dark. Here the night was to be passed. It was here that Saebald's predecessor had dwelt, and here the old warrior had been surprised by the Britons and killed. The place is now called Street Houses. The house was one of the *mutationes* of the Roman road, to which some wooden buildings had been added. But it was exposed, and it was the intention of Saebald to remove his people to a stockaded burg on the summit of what was afterwards called Ingrish Hill, about a mile to the westward of the road. Saebald received his guests with much cordiality, and after supper he was quite willing to satisfy the eager

curiosity of the boys about the life and death of the Viking chief Vidfinn, and about the strange fate of his children, rumours of which had reached them.

The hall of the Billingas was lighted with torches, and after some conversation with Seomel touching the defences and the supply of weapons, the good-natured Saebald turned to the boys and began his tale. "Vidfinn," he said, "was a mighty sea-rover, and like Brand, his brother, a stanch follower of the Eolderman Iffi, father of our king. When the English first advanced beyond the Ouse they were led by Brand and Vidfinn, and Vidfinn eventually formed this frontier station beyond the road, where he and his followers settled. He brought two children, a boy and a girl, with him, named Hjuk and Bil, to whom he was devoted. He called his burg after the girl, Bilbrough, and his people hence were called *Billingas*. It so happened that the spring beside his dwelling on the road was fouled by cattle, and for a time they had to use the water from a well called *Byrgir*, about half a mile up the hill. One day Hjuk and Bil went up the hill to fetch a

pail of water. They took a pole named *Simul*, on which they slung the bucket *Saeg*, and away they went, Bil in front and Hjuk behind, talking and laughing so that the people heard them and thought no harm. But they never returned." The boys had listened eagerly, and Oswith now asked if search was made for the lost children. "Yes, indeed," answered Saebald. "The pole *Simul* and the bucket *Saeg* were found lying near the well *Byrgir* in such a position as to make people think that Hjuk must have fallen down, and that Bil must have come tumbling after. But they were both gone. Search was made in all directions and continued long, but with no result. Vidfinn was wild with grief. At length, in gazing at Mani, who, as you know, is seen on the face of the moon and directs its course, Vidfinn thought he saw two children behind him, and he became convinced that Mani had taken Hjuk and Bil up from the earth as they were coming from the well. They help Mani by presiding over the tides of the ocean, it is thought: Hjuk looks after the flow, while Bil directs the ebb, and both together send the long high

wave up the rivers, which you boys must often have seen, and which is named after the god Ægir."

When Saebald paused, the boys ran out into the road and gazed at the moon. They then saw, what they had never before observed, that there really were two children behind Mani. Astonished and intensely interested, they returned and entreated Saebald to tell them the rest of the story of Vidfinn. The fair-haired chief of the Billingas said that little remained to tell, and before beginning he showed the boys the pole *Simul* and the bucket *Saeg*, which hung on the carved door-post of the hall, and had escaped attention from the Britons. "When Vidfinn had satisfied himself that his beloved children were safe in the hands of Mani," resumed Saebald, "he was consoled, and ten years ago he took another wife, a daughter of one of the Billingas, and had a son named Sivel, but the mother died. Peace had continued so long that the old Viking was off his guard and completely taken by surprise when his burg was attacked at the dead of night by the army of the Britons. He sent little Sivel away

with a girl, and they escaped to Ulfskelf. Vidfinn then defended his home desperately, with his Billingas, and at length he fell amidst a heap of slain. He was amply avenged by the King and his brave warriors, and a worthy tumulus has been raised to the memory of the founder of Bilbrough. My father was Beorn, another of his brothers," concluded the Fairfax, "and as his successor, in the minority of Sivel, I am proud to be the host of the valiant Seomel and his knights" (*cnihts* or boys). By this time the eyes of the four boys were heavy, and they no sooner threw themselves on their heaps of fresh straw in the hall than they were all fast asleep.

At dawn the two chiefs, Seomel and Saebald, went up to the Ingrish Hill to inspect the progress of the stockade and to serve out weapons to the Billingas, and on the way the boys were shown the tumulus of Vidfinn, and, a little farther on, the deep well *Byrgir*. The tumulus had been raised on the very spot where the bucket *Saeg* and the pole *Simul* were found in the grass, so that it is a monument both to the Viking father and to the children kidnapped by Mani.

Taking their leave of the hospitable lord of Bilbrough, Seomel and the boys rode down the Roman road and came to the great battle-field of Helagh. Seomel showed them the place where the enemy's slain were buried, which is called "Hell Hole" to this day. They then went on to the river Wharfe, and crossed by the ford of Nehalennia to the old Roman station of Calcaria, where a strong English outpost was established. Seomel went a mile or two down the river, and fixed upon a hill called Kele-bor for another military station, to guard against sudden incursions from Elmet; while the boys wandered up the stream to a limestone crag. Here the water was deliciously cool and clear, so different from the muddy floods of Wharfe and Ouse, lower down. They stripped and plunged into it, and after their bath they went to the famous shrine of their mother's goddess Nehalennia at Calcaria. Here, in the midst of the white limestone country, the guardian deity of chalk workers and of fruit trees received highest honour. Here too, among her favourite white rocks, she lavished her favours most abundantly among the fruit orchards, and

even now the real wine-sour plum will only grow on the Brotherton lime, and in the Sherburn district. Crossing the ford once more, and riding along the banks of the Wharfe, the little party was very hospitably welcomed at Ulfskelf by the grand old warrior Brand and his wife Verbeia, a sister of the Lady Volisia. Here Coelred and Porlor made the acquaintance of the little Sivel, a bright intelligent child, in whom the strange story told them by Saebald had made them feel a deep interest. Taking leave of their cousin Forthere and of Sivel at Ulfskelf next morning, and of Oswith, who rode on to Hemingborough, Seomel and his two sons arrived at their home. Here they found the Lady Volisia with the children of Elfric—Hereric, Bergliot, and Osric—her own daughters Braga and Nanna, and the dog Shuprak. Thus once more was the happy and united family assembled in the hall of Stillingfleet, with peace fully restored, and all fear of danger vanished. How fortunate it is that it is not given to any of us to know, and to few of us to foreshadow, what a week or a month may bring forth.

CHAPTER V

KIDNAPPED

"I FEEL the Berserker rage flowing through me, and arousing the desire to fight and to kill." It was Hereric who spoke, and he ended his strange words with a wild shout. "You, Hereric!" exclaimed Porlor; "why, you are the gentlest of us all, though no niddring. How strange that you should be so taken! Yet I have heard Coifi say that the hour when the sacred rage inflames us no man knows, but that it should never be resisted. When it comes, he told me, we must kill and kill." He raised another shout, which was echoed by Hereric and Coelred. "Lead us to the attack of savage beasts ten times our size," said Porlor to Coelred, whose eyes were also sparkling with excitement. "That will I," shouted the elder boy; "I will fight any one ten times my size," and he threw his arms

over his head. The three boys had just been having their morning bath, and were sitting and lying on the grass, with their feet in the water of the brook, which rippled over the stones.

It was early morning, and they were to take Bergliot with them into the woods. When they ran home to get their arms, the young princess was waiting at the gate. In a few minutes they joined her, with hosen cross-girt, knives at their sides, and spears in their hands. "We are full of Berserker rage," they told her. "You are full of naughtiness" (the word she used was *hinderscype*), she answered, "and will be whipped." Yet their excitement was contagious, for she ran back into the hall and returned with a short spear and Shuprak at her heels. All four then ran wildly down the hill and over the brook, shouting and brandishing their spears, with the dog running and barking in front. Startled by the noise, the Lady Volisia came to the gate, and watched them, with anxious eyes, until they were hidden by the trees. Then tears trickled down her cheeks. She never saw the boys again. The wild young creatures

made a great circuit in the forest, hurling their spears at everything, and running at speed until they came to the willow thicket where the Stillingfleet brook empties itself into the river Ouse. Here they paused to regain their breath.

Presently Bergliot, in looking through the leafy branches of the willows at the surface of the water, saw, sitting on a tree trunk on the edge of the bank, what she thought was a nixy or water sprite. It was singing, she fancied, but the sound was scarcely audible. "There is a nixy," she said in a whisper to the rest, pointing to where it sat. "Let us kill it," said Hereric. They all ran forward; the boys pushed the little creature into the rushing stream with the butt ends of their spears, while the girl threw a needle at it, which is supposed to be fatal to such sprites. Then they all sang the cruel spell and ran away :—

> Nix, Nix—needle in water,
> Virgin casteth steel in water
> Thou sink and we flee.

As they ran they could hear a long wailing cry, and when they stopped out of breath it

appeared to all of them to form itself into these ominous words :—

> Dreadful your doom,
> Slaves shall ye be,
> Kindred and home
> Never to see.

They looked at each other half-frightened, and Bergliot began to cry. She said she wanted to go home. The boys embraced her tenderly and kissed her, and Coelred told Shuprak to see her safe back. As she turned away she asked them to tell Oswith, if they saw him, that she hoped he would come to visit her very soon. She waved a farewell to them with her hand. Reluctantly, and after casting many longing glances at his young masters, the dog went home with the little girl. "Let us defy the omen," said Coelred: "let us go further afield to satiate our Berserker rage," and all three again plunged into the forest. They ran for hours, hurling their spears at every creature that came in sight. At length, on emerging from the forest into the heathy expanse of Skipwith Common, they paused for a moment to look round. Close by there was a huge wild bull of a dun colour,

with spreading horns, and three cows. Coelred uttered a triumphant cry and hurled his spear at the bull's shoulder. In a moment the ferocious creature was upon him, threw him down amongst the heather, and would have gored and crushed him, if Porlor had not diverted its attention by driving his spear into its flank. It turned round foaming with rage just as Porlor sprang behind a tree and Hereric faced it on one knee with his spear pointed. Wild with rage, it dashed in his direction, then halted with its head up, its eyes glaring, and foam dropping from its mouth. Coelred had been stunned for a minute. He now ran up and attacked the bull in the flank, prodding it with his spear. Daunted by the vigour of the attack, the bull now galloped across the common, followed by the cows. The boys gave chase, shouting and brandishing their weapons, coming up with their antagonist amidst dense underwood, where they succeeded in killing it with their spears. As the noble creature fell there was a downpour of rain and a loud clap of thunder, and amidst the peals the boys thought they again heard the ominous curse of the nixy :—

Dreadful your doom,
Slaves shall ye be,
Kindred and home
Never to see.

They dashed wildly on, they knew not whither. Porlor started a wild-cat, which sprang up a tree. He followed with marvellous agility. The chase turned fiercely at bay, and Coelred climbed up the tree to help. There was a desperate fight among the branches, and the boys got some nasty scratches, but at last one of them plunged a knife into the cat, it lost its hold, and fell to the ground. Meanwhile Hereric had roused a badger from its hole and kept it at bay with his spear. Its mouth was open and its rows of sharp teeth glistened. It would have gone hard with the Atheling if Coelred had not sprung upon it from behind and plunged his knife into a vital part. Once more the three boys resumed their wild career, with the ominous words of the nixy ringing in their ears. The sun was low when they emerged from the forest and came out on the banks of the muddy Ouse just at the point where the Wharfe joins it. They were now exhausted and hungry, so tired indeed that

they could run no more without rest. They were unhappy too, and frightened at the sounds which seemed to form themselves into such dreadful words. The three boys threw themselves on the grass, and in a minute they were fast asleep.

They had not seen a long black boat, like some foul snake, creeping stealthily down the Wharfe to its confluence. It was flat-bottomed and of unusual beam, but low in the water. The crew consisted of half a dozen villainous-looking ruffians, sent by a vessel anchored at the mouth of the Humber to Calcaria on pretence of selling some cloths, and the return cargo was to be stolen. They were sea-thieves and cut-throats. As they descended the Wharfe they saw Forthere and Sivel fishing on the bank and suspecting no evil. Four of them sprang on shore, and in a minute the lads were bound hand and foot, gagged, and thrown into the bottom of the boat. A few minutes afterwards they came in sight of the confluence, just in time to see Coelred, Porlor, and Hereric throw themselves on the grass by the opposite shore. Very stealthily the boat was brought under the bank. Coelred and Hereric were

overpowered and bound before they were half awake. Porlor, however, was aroused by the footsteps. He had time to draw his knife and make a desperate resistance, gashing the arm of one ruffian and stabbing another in the hand. But he was quickly overpowered. His two companions were thrown into the bottom of the boat, where, to their horror and astonishment, they found Forthere and little Sivel in like plight. Porlor was put across a thwart and given an unmerciful beating with a thong of leather, which, in the dialect of the cut-throats, was called a *lorum*. His young friends were nearly mad with impotent rage as they heard the ferocious blows being showered on the child's body. At last he was thrown, bruised and bleeding, among the rest; but, bound as they were, they could do nothing to console or help him. It all seemed like a horrible dream; they scarcely knew where they were, and could do nothing but sob as they were roused at intervals from a half-dozing state.

Meanwhile the boat went swiftly down the Ouse with an ebb-tide. The villains kept a sharp look-out on either bank, and, when half

a mile above Hemingborough, they saw a boy bathing, and swimming out boldly as the tide had slackened. Thinking no harm, he caught hold of one of the boat's oars to rest. In an instant his wrists were seized, he was bound hand and foot, and thrown into the bottom of the boat with the others. It was Oswith. He was quite naked, and one of the crew threw a coarse cloth over him. The grief of the rest of the kidnapped children was redoubled at the sight of their beloved friend, the fearless son of Guthlaf. He was as little able to understand what had really happened as they were, yet he tried to console them. He whispered that he would look out for chances of escape, and reminded them that at least they had the consolation of being together.

All through the night the boat kept her course down the Humber, with the tide against them during the first watch, but with a fair wind. Off the mouth of the Trent the sea-thieves stopped and made fast, until they were joined by another smaller boat coming down that river, which went alongside and passed another boy on board. In spite of their

misery and discomfort, the kidnapped children were fast asleep while the boat was waiting in the mud, and they were aroused by another little boy being thrown amongst them. He said that he was Godric the son of Ulchel, a thegn of the Gainas. He seemed to be as small as Sivel. After a time the seven forlorn children went fast asleep as the boat was rowed down the Humber, and finally came alongside the vessel whose leader had sent the thieves on their kidnapping errand.

This vessel was small, but suited for sea-voyages, and with much more beam than was allowed for an ordinary fighting ship. Her lines were indeed very unlike those of a dragon ship of the Vikings. For she was built primarily for trading, and in the second place for piracy, whenever the opportunity offered, and she had a capacious hold, now half full of merchandise. She was lying off Ravenspur, the site of the Roman station of Prætorium, under the shelter of Y-kill, the Ocellum Promontorium, now Spurn Head. The seven boys were bundled out of the boat and into the ship's hold like so many bales of goods, and the boats were turned adrift.

They had been stolen. The vessel then got under weigh and hoisted her single sail, shaping a southerly course, with a strong breeze which soon freshened into a gale. The stolen children nestled together and slept long, for they were quite worn out with anxiety and grief, to which three of them had added a day of intense excitement and fatigue. They awoke quite famished and were given some food, but throughout the voyage the poor children were treated with vile inhumanity, half-starved, and exposed to the seas which washed into the vessel during the gale. They could not have survived many more days of such treatment. Fortunately the wind was fair, and the voyage had been a short though a stormy one, when the piratical thieves anchored in the port of Amfleet. It is not known whence they came nor what land was disgraced by having bred them, nor does it matter. They were paid and employed by a trader with more humanity but as little conscience as themselves.

CHAPTER VI

MYSTACON

Mystacon was the principal trader between Gaul and the northern countries on the one hand, and Italy and the East on the other, during the latter part of the sixth century. He was a Greek, a native of Crete, brought up by a merchant at Massilia, and his life had been devoted to mercantile pursuits, in which his cunning, ability, and absence of all scruples had enabled him to amass wealth, which he sought by every means to increase. In those days Brunehaud, a Gothic princess from Spain, was Regent of the eastern part of France, called Austrasia, her husband, King Sigebert, having been assassinated in 575. Neustria, which included northern and central France, was governed by Queen Fredegonda as Regent to her little son Clotaire II. A handsome woman of low extraction, she had

waded through murders and other evil deeds to her lofty position, in which she maintained herself by her strong will. Capable of any crime to gain her objects, courageous and unscrupulous, she must have possessed great ability and astuteness to have been successful in maintaining her power so long in that turbulent age. Her husband, Chilperic I., died by poison administered by his wife in 584, and Fredegonda was Regent from that year until 596. Gontran, the brother of Sigebert and Chilperic, was King of Burgundy. A fourth brother, Charibert, King of Paris, who was father of Bertha, the wife of Ethelbert, King of Kent, died without male issue in 570. These four brothers were the grandsons of Clovis.

The Greek trader, when he found that the fierce nation of the Franks was ruled over by the Queen-Regents, Brunehaud and Fredegonda, hastened to propitiate them by presents, and to secure their patronage. As regards Fredegonda he had been successful. He consulted her wishes, and brought her the luxuries she required both from the north and south, always as free offerings. In return he

was under her protection, his goods were to pass unmolested through her dominions, and he was to be assisted by her officers. He had been granted similar privileges by King Gontran of Burgundy, whose country included the shores of the Rhone from Lyons to the sea.

In his northern trade Mystacon employed agents to bring him valuable furs and amber, and even unicorns' horns, from the countries bordering on the Baltic, tin from Cornwall, and occasionally he paid sea-thieves to kidnap young children from the north, who fetched high prices in the markets of Rome and Constantinople. He had a shed at Ambleteuse where he received his northern merchandise, preferring that little port to the neighbouring harbour of Gessoriacum (Boulogne), because a Frankish officer, from whom his gifts had secured him favour and protection, was stationed there with a strong body of disciplined followers.

Mystacon had been several days at Ambleteuse, his merchandise was stored in the shed, and his servants had pack-horses ready to convey it southward along the old Roman

road, when the vessel from the Humber anchored off the port and landed its cargo. The crew was composed of such dangerous villains that the merchant induced the Queen-Regent's officer to post armed men behind his shed, before he ventured to confer with them. Besides a pile of beaver skins and other commodities, seven boys were put on shore. They stood on the sandy beach close together, the little ones clinging to the three bigger lads. All were wet through, and looked half-starved and miserable. Porlor and little Godric were clinging to Coelred. Sivel had his arms round Forthere, and Hereric nestled under the sheltering arm of the son of Guthlaf. Oswith the fearless, who was nearly naked, with only a bit of sack-cloth round his loins, alone maintained a defiant look. There was no longer any sign or token of Berserker rage among the rest.

The wily Greek came forward to look at them. He saw their great beauty and their value, but he also saw from their appearance that they had been cruelly treated. The sea-thieves demanded the payment he had promised, so much for each. "But they are

not in good condition," he remonstrated; "the price must be reduced." A livid mark on Porlor's neck caught his quick, searching eye. He pulled down the boy's shirt, and saw that his back was covered with weals, the effect of the cruel flogging he had received. "Damaged goods," he said. Then, turning to his servants, he told them to take the boys into the shed, and to clothe and feed them. "I will only pay half-price for damaged goods," he repeated, turning to the spokesman of the sea-thieves. "That little wild-cat used his knife on one of us," the man answered, "and the flogging served him right." "What is that to me, my friend?" rejoined Mystacon, in a low but irritating voice. "You can please yourselves about damaging your goods, that is your business, but you cannot expect to get the same price as if they were not damaged. If a heavy bale was to fall and hurt one of you, of course it is open to you to cut and slash it if you please, and it may serve the bale right. That I do not dispute. But you must not expect the same price in the market as if the bale had not been cut and slashed. I can only

pay you half-price for the boys." The kidnappers could not follow the subtle argument of the Greek, but they began to look dangerous. The merchant retreated back a few paces. "Pay us what you promised, thou cursed cheat, or we will kill thee and the boys too." He retreated rapidly back and cried out for help, as the villains drew their long knives and rushed towards him. In another minute they were all overpowered and thrown on the ground by the Frankish guard. The officer came forward and suggested capital punishment, offering to hang them in a row. "It is the just and proper treatment," said Mystacon, "of those who try to extort full price for damaged goods from unwary traders. As soon as your laudable proposal has been carried into effect, I shall have pleasure in requesting your lordship to accept the large sum which the criminals refused." Another hour had not passed before twenty bodies were hanging from the branches of the stunted pines round Ambleteuse, and before the Frankish officer had an additional reason for extending his protection to the wily merchant.

Mystacon set out with his train of laden horses and attendants early next morning, following the old Roman road by Amiens, Soissons, and Autun to Lyons. The boys had been warmly clothed and fed, and had slept well, nor were they prevented from having a morning bath in the sea. Two pack-horses were allowed them, so that they could ride by turns, while the rest trotted along on the road-side. They found that they could understand much that was said to them by the servants, and when Mystacon spoke the Frank dialect slowly and clearly, they could comprehend the meaning of nearly every word. For in those days there was little difference between the Frankish and other Teutonic dialects.

The journey across Picardy restored the health and strength, and revived the spirits, of the English lads. This limestone tract, with its keen fresh air, arable surface, and well-watered meadows, reminded them of the country round Calcaria. At Samarobriva, or Amiens, they rested, and Mystacon was allowed to store his goods against the wall of the town, and to encamp there by the Roman

gate of the Twins, whereon was carved Romulus and Remus suckled by the wolf. This was the first opportunity the boys had found of collecting their thoughts, and holding a serious consultation. Even now they scarcely understood what had happened or where they were. Their first words, as they sat among the bales, were words of grief at the sorrow and anxiety of their relations, who would search high and low through the woods, until at last they gave them up as dead. "Alca will give them hope and courage," said Coelred. "She will know that we are together, and she knows that we shall return. For we are to die in battle fighting for a righteous cause, and that cannot be anywhere but in England. She is praying now that the gods will watch over us, and her prayers are ever answered." These words, spoken with an air of conviction, comforted the rest. "We must suffer," said Oswith, "but that does not signify when we have such good reason for hope. Porlor has already suffered more than the rest of us." "At that I rejoice," said Porlor, whose little head had been teeming with ideas suggested by Mithras and the bull, ever since he had

gazed on the sculpture at York. "Through suffering we shall all win the rewards prepared for the true and brave; and the thong those niddring thieves called *lorum* is no word of bane to me, but of good luck." "Nay, then," said Hereric, smiling, "we must fasten it to thy name and call thee Porlorlorum." "Let it be so," answered the imaginative child; "it will remind me, and all of us, in the happy years that will surely come when this darkness has been turned to light, that we had to pass through suffering to happiness and home."

They then began to wonder what their position really was, and whither Mystacon was taking them. They had already discovered that he was a cunning liar, and they believed nothing he told them, although he had uniformly treated them with kindness. Forthere proposed to run away, and both Coelred and Oswith were inclined to some plan of making their way across country to the coast, and seizing a boat. But they would not attempt it unarmed. Alca had told them that little Porlor should give them counsel, and they all turned to him. "My rede is

that we wait to learn more, and to see what will happen," he said. "I do not fear the distance this man is taking us from home, if we have knowledge. A short distance with ignorance means disaster, perhaps death. A very great distance is easy to go over with knowledge of all the obstacles, and of the way to overcome or avoid them. The wisdom of Alca and her insight will bring comfort to our parents. It is for us to remember her words, to follow them, to wait and watch until the time comes for us to go home. I know the time will come, and the gods will watch over us." "We will wait and watch," they all said. It was now dark. They laid their weary heads down side by side, and passed into a happy sleep. Their dreams were of home and kindred.

The boys had their morning bath in one of the numerous bright little trout streams, bordered by aspen and willow, which flow down to the sands of St. Valery. Later in the morning, as they sat talking near the Gate of the Twins, a monk came out in a long dark-coloured cassock, with a rope round his waist. He was a young man, with a patient look in

his grey eyes, and a circlet of thick fair hair round his tonsure. When he saw the lads, he stopped to improve the occasion. He asked them if they knew what had happened at that Gate of the Twins, and he told them the story of St. Martin. "Out of this gate," he said, "long, long ago, a brave and virtuous Roman soldier named Martin rode, on a very frosty winter's day. He had a cloak wrapped closely round him, and as he passed along the causeway he saw a poor man shivering with cold. Martin drew his sword and, cutting his cloak in two, he gave half to the beggar. This was charity, the greatest of all virtues, which covers a multitude of sins. Martin was afterwards baptized in the half cloak, and became a Christian and a Saint." After a pause he asked, "Are you Christians?" Coelred answered that they did not so much as know that there were such people as Christians. "But," he added, "we know very well that it is good to give to those who are in need; for the Princess Alca has taught us." "We know it," said Hereric, "and we try to remember to act as she has taught us, but we are not always able to do right." The hearts of all

the boys were warming towards the young monk.

There was a longer pause, and then the monk told them that they must be baptized into the fold of Christ. He raised his voice. "The Son of God went down into hell, but now He has risen from the dead." The boys started to their feet with looks of astonishment and deep interest. These were almost the very words spoken by the Princess Alca, under the ash tree at the foot of Garraby Hill. "Then Alca is right!" they exclaimed. "She is always right. The Son of God has risen." Porlor went on to ask about baptism, when Mystacon came forward. He had been listening to the latter part of the conversation, and did not like it. Concealing his displeasure by a forced smile, he invented a lie on the spur of the moment. "By the order of the Bishop of Noviodunum," he said, addressing the monk, "these Pagan youths are being conducted to his city to be duly instructed and baptized. I thank you for the interest you have taken in them, but your help is not needed." There was nothing more to be said. The good monk gave his

blessing to the boys, and went on his way, while Mystacon issued hurried orders for the pack-horses to be loaded, and in another hour he and his merchandise were again journeying southward; but he kept well clear of the city of Noviodunum (Soissons).

The most anxious part of the journey for the merchant was approaching. He was bound to visit the Queen, wherever she might be, both on the way north and south, and she took whatever she fancied without paying. Even this heavy and uncertain tax generally left a wide margin of profit, but it was a source of anxiety, and he now feared that she might take a fancy to the beautiful English boys. Fortune, however, favoured him. Fredegonda was, he had ascertained, at the manor of Braine-sur-la-Vesle, between Soissons and Rheims, but he had also learned that she was on the point of departure. He cunningly timed his arrival on the day that she was to begin her journey, in the hope that she would accept a present, and, in the hurry of starting, forgo her usual practice of rummaging through the whole contents of his caravan. Late on the third evening after leaving Amiens,

Mystacon encamped outside the gates of Braine-sur-la-Vesle. This Merovingian palace was an immense farm, with large unfortified wooden houses, stables, barns, and cow-sheds. In the morning the Franks in attendance on the royal family began to march out of the great enclosure. They had a fierce air, with large and vigorous bodies, inured to cold and hunger. Their favourite weapon, the battle-axe with a short handle, rested on their shoulders, and they wore their long hair tied up over their foreheads, forming a kind of aigrette, then falling behind like a horse's tail. The long line of the escort of warriors was followed by several waggons drawn by oxen. In the first sat Fredegonda, with the little King Clotaire, then only four years of age. She was a most formidable-looking woman, with a fierce, cruel glance in her large black eyes, and a haughty bearing. Mystacon advanced in a cringing attitude, offering a valuable present, which she accepted, as he had hoped, without stopping, ordering it to be put into one of the waggons. As the royal train passed out of sight, the merchant gave orders to continue the journey to Lyons, by

way of Bibracte or Augustodunum (Autun). The boys had seen the warriors, and the great lady in her waggon. But they had been told nothing. If Porlor had known that it was the Queen of the Franks, his rede would probably have been to rush forward, tell her that Hereric was an Atheling of Deira, and claim her protection. But they knew nothing, were kept behind, and were only allowed to peep between the bales.

At Lyons the merchant embarked his goods in a large boat, went down the Rhone to its mouth, and then sailed in a vessel from Massilia to the mouth of the Tiber. Before embarking, the boys again had a long and anxious talk over their position. Mystacon had told them lie after lie about their destination, and they were in great perplexity. He said that he had saved them from death at the hands of the sea-thieves, that he was their saviour and benefactor, and that the journey was for their good. They had thought of telling their captor that Hereric was an Atheling, but on the whole it seemed to them that the knowledge might increase the danger, if it existed, and that their wisest

course was to keep silence about themselves. They had enjoyed the journey through France. The sight of a strange country and of many things that were new to them had amused and interested them, and they now looked as bright and fresh as on the morning when the Berserker rage so unfortunately seized upon gentle Hereric, and led to such an unlooked-for catastrophe. Their fate was now sealed. After their embarkation in the boat on the river Rhone, it would not be many days before they would enter the imperial city and become the victims of Mystacon's greed.

PART II

EXILE

Go forth, bright youths, nor any danger shun,
  Go forth to brave whatever may betide;
Your country needs your knowledge hardly won,
  Your heads to counsel and your hearts to guide.

But let fond memory turn again to home,
  Come back enriched with stores of foreign lore,
Return to gladden hearts that long bemoan
  Loved kinsmen's absence from their native shore.

CHAPTER I

FALLEN ROME

In the end of the sixth century the old Rome, the lingering remnant of the imperial city, had nearly disappeared. Language, literature, art, science were being crushed out, not so much by inroads of barbarians as by the bigotry of bishops and monks. When the Goths, under Alaric, entered Rome by the Salarian gate in 410 and revelled in pillage for six days, they did little or no damage to buildings or works of art. Half a century afterwards, when Genseric sacked the city for fourteen days, he only carried off the gilt-bronze tiles on the roof of the Capitoline temple of Jupiter and the spoils from the temple of Jerusalem ; and during the sack of Ricimer little injury was done to buildings. Rome suffered more from Totila in 546 than from any former sack, half the walls being destroyed and many houses being burnt.

Theodoric the Goth established his capital at Ravenna. He took steps to protect the monuments of Rome, and his reign from 493 to 526 may be considered to have been the period which saw the last of the true Romans. Cassiodorus strove to preserve the rapidly failing taste for the models of classical antiquity. Boethius, the last of the Romans whom Cato or Cicero would have acknowledged as their countryman, threw a flickering ray over the fallen empire. But both Boethius and his learned friend Symmachus were murdered by Theodoric in 526. Long before this the last joyous festivals of old Rome, the Lupercalia, had been abolished through the bigotry of Pope Gelasius, and with them disappeared all living vestiges of the old life. The buildings were imperishable. The shell was there amidst dirt and desolation; the life was gone. Monks pulled down or defaced the edifices and statues raised by genius, and the beautiful temple of Apollo gave place to the cells of Benedict on the summit of Monte Cassiano.

Belisarius and Narses recovered Italy for the emperors of the East in 536, and Justinian fixed the capital of his *exarch* or governor at

Ravenna, not at Rome. But the walls of Rome were repaired, and partially rebuilt. Only thirty years afterwards Alboin, with an army of Lombards, conquered Northern Italy without encountering any opposition, established an oppressive aristocracy in the subjugated provinces, and extended his inroads to the gates of Rome. This was the condition of affairs when Mystacon arrived at the mouth of the Tiber with his merchandise. Maurice Tiberius, the best of the Eastern emperors, had ascended the throne at Constantinople in 582. His exarch Romanus ruled at Ravenna. Young Autharis had succeeded Alboin as king of the Lombards in 586, and his armies kept Rome in perpetual fear. The suburbs were constantly devastated. The city was vacant and solitary: the depopulation had been rapid. Famine was frequent, the edifices were exposed to ruin, and the chief person in the city was the Bishop, who exulted over the desolation of idolatry. His name was Pelagius II., but the ecclesiastic who possessed the greatest influence over the miserable remnant of the inhabitants was the Deacon Gregory. He was a native of the city, born in 544, and his parents, Gordian

and Sylvia, were of senatorial rank. He was also wealthy, and he had founded a monastery on the Caelian Hill, dedicated to St. Andrew. He was learned in the Scriptures and in the works of the early fathers of the Church, and was a voluminous writer both of letters and of commentaries. While acting as the Pope's nuncio at Constantinople, he had occupied himself in a violent controversy with the Eutychians on the question whether, after the resurrection, the bodies of the faithful would be impalpable like air, or palpable though subtle and sublimed. The former view was the heresy which Gregory, with the important aid of the Emperor, effectually suppressed. He then returned to Rome, and maintained his influence by relieving distress through his great wealth and his organising ability, and also by the power of his pathetic but rude eloquence. But he was a narrow-minded bigot. He hated the monuments of classic genius, destroyed the magnificent baths and theatres, and did more harm to the buildings of Rome than all the barbarians, from Alaric to Totila, put together. The decided progress made by the ancients in astronomy

and geography was declared to be contrary to scriptural truth, sculpture was condemned as an ally of paganism, and both science and art disappeared. The belief of Gregory that the end of the world was close at hand also had a mischievous tendency. As a young man he was often tormented with pains in the bowels, and was continually suffering from low fever, and these ailments probably had their effect on his temperament. His zeal for the spread of Christianity perhaps atones for his shortcomings in other respects, and at all events Gregory was the leading figure in the Rome of the end of the sixth century.

The son of the Senator Gordian was not the only wealthy man in Rome, or it would have been no place for Mystacon and his wares. Patricians, with incomes from estates in Campania and Sicily, still lived in some of the ruins of departed greatness on the Caelian Hill. We meet with the names of Decius, Basilius, Olybrius, Orestes, Maximus, Symmachus, and Pamphronius. But the sons and daughters of others were reduced to penury, and many descendants of consuls and senators were begging their bread in the streets.

Pamphronius was one of those who, by flight on some occasions and prompt submission on others, had succeeded in preserving sufficient of this world's goods to enable him to live in a partially-rebuilt villa, and to show signs of comparative wealth. He had a few clients round him, and was a customer of Mystacon.

Symmachus Boethius was another survivor of an ancient and renowned family. His maternal ancestor had been a bright model of learning and virtue in the days of Constantine and his immediate successors. Scholar, statesman, and orator, he gave new life and vigour to the literature of Rome, and he was zealous for the ancient faith. He remonstrated with the Emperor Gratian on the removal of the altar of victory from the Senate in 384. His letters are extant, and that in favour of the altar of victory is, we are told, infinitely superior to the verbose, abusive, and dishonest reply of St. Ambrose. Proconsul in Achaia and Africa, he had great wealth, estates in Campania, Sicily, and Mauritania, and a mansion on the Caelian Hill. His descendants for four generations were all distinguished. The fifth in descent, named Quintus Aurelius

Memmius Symmachus, had an only daughter Rusticiana. She was happily married to Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, whose father was consul in 487. Boethius was famous for his learning and for his charities. He was accused of a wish to free Rome from the Goths, was condemned unheard, and put to death, with his son, by order of Theodoric. His *Consolatio Philosophiæ*, written in prison, shows that he was not a Christian. Rusticiana was reduced to poverty until her property was restored by Theodoric's daughter Amalasontha. At the sack of Rome in 541 she was again reduced to beggary, and was only saved from death by the intervention of Totila.

Anicius Severinus Boethius, the son of the great Boethius and of Rusticiana, was consul in 522, and died, soon after his mother, in 570. He had succeeded in recovering his Sicilian estates, and in raising the fortunes of his family sufficiently to be able to reside in the fine old mansion of the Symmachus family on the Caelian. His son Symmachus Boethius continued to prosper, and, at the time of which we speak, he was one of the few wealthy patricians of Rome. His wife was a virtuous

lady named Otacilia. His villa made some pretensions to its ancient splendour, and its owner, now a man between fifty and sixty, outwardly conformed to the Christian religion, as all who valued their peace and safety were bound to do in those days. The religion of Ambrose and of Gregory became a persecuting religion as soon as its hierarchy had the power to persecute. In this and in other essentials it differed widely from the religion of Christ. By ready conformity the patricians Pamphronius and Symmachus Boethius maintained friendly relations with the Deacon Gregory and his monks of St. Andrew, who were their neighbours on the Caelian Hill. They were consulted on the affairs of the city, especially on the absorbing questions relating to food-supply, but all real power was in the hands of the Bishop and clergy, whose preaching swayed the mob. Gregory was, indeed, a remarkable personality. His character presented a singular mixture of sense and superstition, pride and humility, simplicity and cunning; and through all there was that touch of sympathy which secured the support of the multitude, and that burning and impulsive

zeal which seemed to carry all before it, and which was mainly directed to the propagation of his faith. His worst trait was his unprincipled time-serving. When the good Emperor Maurice was murdered, whom he knew well, and from whom he had received much kindness, he wrote a flattering letter to his murderer Phocas, one of the most infamous wretches that ever disgraced the purple, which is worded in a way that is simply revolting. It needs much zeal to atone for such baseness.

These were the leaders of Rome, but not of living Rome. They were like small crabs in a great dead shell. It is difficult to realise the effect on the mind of any one then coming to Rome for the first time, and gazing upon the superb baths and theatres, the splendid temples and halls in long vistas, all desolate and abandoned, with here and there a priceless work of art thrown down and broken. Everywhere silence and desolation, except where some monk might be seen preaching to a squalid group, or where half-starved crowds assembled at church doors for doles of food. The population had dwindled from millions to thousands, and clergy had

taken the place of soldiery and well-to-do citizens of the empire, but in much smaller numbers. Still there were a few wealthy people, sufficient to induce traders to expose valuable goods for sale.

Mystacon, when he arrived in his vessel, found the port of Ostia quite empty, and there was ample space at his disposal in the long row of dilapidated emporia facing the Tiber, at the foot of Mount Aventine. Here his goods were warehoused until the day of the market, which was then held in the beautiful Forum of Trajan. He now had to disclose his real intention to the English boys. He had safely housed them in a large room, with plenty of his own hirelings always more or less on guard outside. He opened his communication by dwelling upon his kindness and liberality, on having saved their lives when the sea-thieves would have killed them, and on the gratitude they owed him. At last the truth came out. He would be obliged to sell them in the market, owing to the great expense they had been to him, and if a sufficient sum could not be obtained, he would have to take them to Ravenna or to

MYSTACON ATTACKED BY HIS BOY CAPTIVES

Constantinople. He was unprepared for the outburst of rage and fury with which his base scheme was received by the little boys. They told him that Hereric was an atheling, and that all were the sons of thegns, better born than any one in Rome. Their eyes flamed with Berserker madness as they cried out that they would kill him as they would kill a wild-cat or a badger, and Forthere actually flew at his throat. The coward was taken by surprise. He cried out for help, and could not collect his ideas and decide upon the course to take until the lads were all tied hand and foot. He was in great perplexity. A violent scene at the market was out of the question. His wish was to flog them within an inch of their lives; but, as he had told his deceased accomplices, damaged goods only fetch half-price. He must display them with whole skins. At last he determined to starve them into submission. He told them that they would have no food until they consented to go quietly to the Forum, and left them with the door well barred. For more than thirty-six hours they resolutely held out, but the bigger boys could not bear to hear little Godric and

Sivel crying for food. They turned to Porlor for his counsel. None of them had been more furious, none of them now felt a stronger desire to kill the treacherous villain who had employed the kidnappers, as they now fully believed. He said that the shame was almost more than they could bear, but that it would at least be a great gain to be free from Mystacon. No master could be worse, and when they were older and stronger they could defy any master to detain them. "But the shame! the shame!" moaned Coelred and Oswith, as they lay with their heads in their hands prone to the ground. It had to be done. The next time Mystacon came, Porlor told him to bring food, and that they would go without resistance. The boys had few words and could not scold. But the villain was told that they knew him as he was, far viler and baser than the sea-thieves, a niddring and a liar, and that some day they would kill him. He sent them plenty of food, and his sickly smile betokened malice not unmixed with fear. His mind was, however, relieved: he would get his price.

"To be sold as slaves!" In all their thoughts of possible danger and suffering,

they had never anticipated anything so bad as this. They called to mind the words that the sounds in the forest seemed to form themselves into, and shuddered. But after hours of despondency the brave little fellows took heart. Coelred was the leader who now urged his companions to remember the words of the Princess. They talked long and anxiously, but before they laid down their heads to sleep, they had, with one accord, all raised their right hands and cried—"Come what may, we will quit ourselves like men—above all, like Englishmen!"

CHAPTER II

IN BONDAGE AT ROME

THE Forum of Trajan was as yet uninjured. The noble rows of buildings with colonnades, including the once well-stored library, still surrounded the large paved court, and in the centre stood the beautiful column with its elaborate representation in bronze of the events of the Dacian war. Here important markets were held, and on one autumn morning of the year 588 several merchants, who had lately arrived, exposed many things for sale. Abundance of people resorted thither to buy. Mystacon had his wares arranged under a colonnade. He invited attention in a cringing attitude, seeking for purchasers. The English boys stood in a group quite naked, their eyes full of tears of shame and rage. Among the first people who stopped in front of them was a thin and emaciated ecclesiastic,

accompanied by another, who was younger and of stouter build. The older man had an aquiline nose and hollow cheeks, bright piercing eyes, which had assumed a gentle expression, and a somewhat commanding air. It was Gregory himself, then aged forty-four, and his secretary Peter. Mystacon bowed low before them. Gregory looked at the boys with admiration, and turning to the merchant, he remarked that their bodies were white, their countenances beautiful, and their hair very fine. Mystacon bowed still lower. "From what country or nation were they brought?" he asked. The reply was that they came from the island of Britain, whose inhabitants are of that personal appearance. "Are these islanders Christians, or are they still involved in the errors of Paganism?" was the next inquiry. He was told that they were Pagans. Fetching a deep sigh, he exclaimed—"Alas! what pity that the author of darkness is possessed of men of such fair countenances, and that, being remarkable for such graceful aspects, their minds should be void of inward grace. What," he demanded, "is the name of that nation?" The kid-

napper replied that they were called Angles. "Right," said Gregory, "for they have angelic faces, and it becomes such to be co-heirs with the angels in heaven. What is the name," he proceeded, "of the province from which they are brought?" The reply was that the name of the province was Deira. "Truly are they *De irâ*," said he, "withdrawn from wrath and called to the mercy of Christ. How is the king of that province called?" Mystacon said that his name was Ella; and Gregory, alluding to it as he walked on, observed to Peter that Hallelujah, the praise of God the Creator, must be sung in those parts. Gregory was on his way to have an interview with the Pope, and on coming into his presence, he proposed that ministers should be sent to the English, by whom they might be converted to Christ; and, in his impulsive way, he declared that he was ready to undertake that work himself, by the assistance of God. Pelagius replied that he was willing to grant his request, but that the people would never consent to his departure. Gregory then entrusted to Peter the business of purchasing some of these "Angles," and sent him back to the market.

The boys did not understand a word of the remarks made by Gregory and by other passers-by who stopped to question Mystacon. Presently two patricians, advanced in years, followed by clients and attendants, walked into the Forum and stopped at the colonnade where the lads were still exposed. After gazing upon them, Symmachus Boethius observed to his companion Pamphronius that he had never seen such perfect symmetry and beauty except in ancient sculpture. "The works of Praxiteles are looked upon with disapproval by our good friends the priests, so I would fain ornament my villa with living forms that would be worthy of the chisel of the most gifted sculptor of antiquity." Pamphronius expressed his concurrence, and his desire to possess at least two of the young slaves. Calling Mystacon aside, they made various inquiries, and concluded bargains by which Symmachus Boethius became the owner of Coelred and Porlor, while Oswith and Sivel fell to Pamphronius. Their clients were instructed to complete the arrangement and pay the purchase-money, and the great men passed on. No sooner were they

out of sight, than Peter arrived breathless to carry out the instructions of his master. Mystacon was delighted, for his troubles and anxieties were fully repaid. Peter agreed to his terms, and the Atheling Hereric, Forthere, and Godric became the property of the Deacon Gregory.

The boys were thus relieved from their shameful and degrading position, which they had looked forward to with such horror and dismay. Their clothes were restored to them, and they were told by signs to accompany the servants of the patricians and Peter, the road of all being the same, namely, that leading to the Caelian Hill. Casting looks of vindictive hatred at Mystacon, they gladly accompanied their new acquaintances.

Of all the seven hills of Rome, the Caelian was the most favoured by the wealthier classes during the latter days of the empire, and their villas were scattered over it, half-hidden by groves of cypress trees. But the troublous times had wrought destruction, and most of them were now in ruins. Facing the Palatine, where the imperial palace stood desolate and abandoned, was the monastery of St.

Andrew, the villas of Symmachus and Pamphronius, and the deserted temple of Divus Claudius, while just below ran the Appian Way. In rear stood the Sacellum Dianæ, the arch of Dolabella, and the chapel containing little votive ships of marble, reminding the boys of the votive boats in the tumulus of Vidfinn at Bilbrough. The aqueduct of Nero entered Rome at the back of the Caelian Hill, and was one of the few which still brought water to the city; and to the south were the Lateran Palace and the famous Asinarian Gate, by which Totila and his army entered in 546, through the treachery of some Isaurian sentries.

The villa of Symmachus was the best and most perfect that remained in the Rome of Gregory. The atrium and adjacent halls were of noble proportions; there was a large garden in the rear, full of myrtles and other shrubs; and beyond were the stables, near which Coelred and Porlor were provided with a *cubiculum* to themselves. Symmachus only required the lads to attend him on certain occasions, and to perform outdoor work, to which they felt no objection. He was a man of a kindly and

somewhat timid disposition, fond of a certain amount of display, and with cultivated tastes. His amiable wife Otacilia was very kind to the lads. They had liberty to wander over the city, and Porlor was full of eager curiosity.

Pamphronius was less wealthy; his villa was of smaller proportions and in a more ruinous condition, and he himself was a man of a more exacting disposition, and with less natural kindliness than his neighbour. Yet Oswith and little Sivel were well treated, and they were very fortunate in the companionship of a son of one of the freedmen of Pamphronius named Bassus, who was some years older than Oswith. This youth was of mixed Roman and Gothic descent, tall for his age and handsome, and well educated, being able to speak the Greek language, as well as the debased Latin then talked at Rome, and having picked up much of the ancient lore, in addition to what he had been taught of Christianity. Bassus from the first conceived an ardent boyish attachment for Oswith and a warm friendship for all the English lads, and he continued to be a valued and faithful companion to the end

of their lives. He was destined to survive them all but one.

With their life in the monastery of St. Andrew the three others, or at least two of them, were not so well pleased. The prior, named Augustine, was a disciplinarian, inclined to be harsh and imperious to those under him, and his humility was of that kind which is nearly related to pride. Times had to be observed, rules must be respected; yet the lads enjoyed a certain share of liberty. The gentle and self-respecting Hereric fell more easily into the regular ways of the monks. He considered it to be more dignified to obey, and he was deeply interested in the new ideas and conceptions conveyed in the little he could understand of the teaching of Peter, who was appointed to instruct them before baptism. But Forthere hated the confinement and the whole life, longing for the sports and adventures of the forests to which he had been accustomed. Little Godric followed the lead of Forthere, who was rebellious from the first. The monks found it necessary to correct him before he had been an inmate more than a few days, and they would have

proceeded to more severe measures if he had persisted in his disobedience. The loyal devotion of Forthere to his companion as an atheling, and his sincere affection for Hereric himself, were the motives which probably saved him. For Hereric's sake he would submit when he would have been cut to pieces before he would have obeyed a monk; and, in fact, the authorities ruled him through the influence of the Atheling. The fierce young Englishman was a true son of Brand of Ulfskelf, the mighty warrior and most loyal of all the followers of King Ella. Like his father, young Forthere could brook no tyranny, but, like his father, he would die for any atheling of the house of Deira.

A monk named Laurentius was appointed to instruct the four boys outside the monastery. They understood very little that he told them, and that through the help of Bassus, for as yet they could only exchange thoughts by means of a few signs and words established between themselves and their new friend. Nevertheless, Gregory caused all the seven English lads to be baptized without further delay, deciding that the instruction of Peter

and Laurentius had been sufficient. In a very few months Bassus taught them the language then in use at Rome, a dialect of Latin in process of conversion into Italian, and they were able to understand all that was said to them, as well as to hold conversations. He then began to teach them Greek, the language of the imperial court and of commerce, and the boys in the villas of the two patricians worked hard to acquire it, Bassus having impressed upon them that it alone would enable them to comprehend fully the many strange things they would see and hear, and would give them the knowledge which was power.

Coelred, Oswith, and Porlor, with Bassus as their guide, had wandered through the almost deserted streets of Rome, and gazed with wonder and admiration on the magnificent edifices, which were then neglected and dilapidated, but not actually in ruins. They had especially examined the fine temple to the Sun erected by the Emperor Aurelian on the Quirinal, and while they rested under its ornate portico, Bassus had explained the true import of Mithras stabbing the bull. This

opened a whole world of imaginative speculation in the mind of Porlor, who had never forgotten his wonder at the sight of the bas-relief in the cave at York. On another day they crossed the Tiber and visited Constantine's basilica dedicated to St. Peter, which presented a sorry appearance when compared with the monuments of antiquity. The sides were of plain unplastered brick, with arched openings for windows, and in front there were figures and emblems painted in fresco, in a very debased style of art. Even a child must have been impressed with the superiority of the ancient edifices. The English boys called to mind the impression they had received from beholding the ruins of Roman temples at York; and how it had been borne in upon their minds that a mighty empire had passed away, and that it was for their countrymen to build something greater on its ruins. These ideas now recurred to them with immeasurably greater force as they sat together under the portico of the desecrated temple of Jupiter on the Capitol, and commanded a view of the graceful temples round the Forum, of the palace rising above them on the Palatine, and of the

long vista of edifices terminating with the Colosseum. The warm sun and deep blue sky gave a brilliance to the scene, which contrasted with the signs of decay that could be detected by the eye, in places where broken statues and pavements and heaps of fallen tiles denoted the desolation of the present time. Bassus told them how the Forum used to be crowded with citizens, he showed them the place whence great senators and orators used to make speeches to the people, and he described the processions of the lupercalia and of the milites. All had passed away. Their young thoughts were not depressed. They reflected on what was to follow, on another great people arising to replace the dead Roman Empire. But they did not think that it was to be found here among the monks and the debased rabble of Gregory's Rome. Their aspirations turned to the North, to the homes of Deira, and to the stalwart English, irresistible in war and open to new ideas and fresh knowledge. It was becoming something more than a dream amongst them, that it was ordained that they should bring back to their kindred these new ideas and this fresh knowledge. They would

diligently learn all that could be useful to their people in the lands of the ancient civilisation, until they were old enough to wear swords and take their places as men in the battle array; and then they would return, if need be fighting their way home. This was the result of many discussions and conversations, held among the cypress groves of the Caelian Hill, after exploring excursions through the desolate city.

The boys from the two villas usually took their morning bath in a tank near the *navicula*, which was shaded by trees and supplied with water from Nero's aqueduct. Here, too, the Atheling, with their cousin Forthere and little Godric, often joined them, and they talked over their prospects, and discussed all the wondrous things they had seen and heard. The Christian religion had been more clearly explained to them when they acquired the use of the language then talked at Rome. They understood that the Son of God had died for all mankind, and that He had risen from the dead. They knew that they must pray to Him for guidance and to keep them from sin, and they all did so. But they

thought that the teaching of Laurentius and Peter was the same as the far more impressive and beautiful teaching of the Princess Alca. In their conception Christ was another name for Balder. But they kept these opinions to themselves, and gave the name of Christ to the Son of God they worshipped.

Often taking counsel together, they formed a small *Gemót*, as they called it, of seven little boys, with the world of Rome against them, all except Bassus, whom they had made one of themselves. Hereric invented a watch-word to warn them of the approach of strangers who might disturb their meetings in the cool cypress groves. It consisted of the two words *Bylr*, a tempest, and *Grima*, a thing helmeted or veiled. The meaning was that the unknown or veiled one might betoken a storm for them. For they conversed respecting all the affairs of Rome, speculated on the hidden meanings of all they heard, and talked over the time for rising against their oppressors and fighting their way home. There were two or three people whom Forthere intended to kill first, including Mystacon.

So time passed on, and after two years

Gregory succeeded to the Pontificate. He had not forgotten his project of sending a mission to the Angles, and was mindful of the advantage of having youthful interpreters ready on the Caelian. But for a long time the miserable condition of Rome absorbed his attention. The state of affairs had become perilous. The corn ships failed to arrive time after time, and these failures caused misery among the people. It was a common occurrence to see crowds clamouring for food at the doors of St. Peter's and at the Lateran. A total cessation of the Egyptian corn trade was threatened, while the supply from Sicily was becoming more and more precarious. Even greater danger threatened Rome from the north. The Lombards made constant incursions, riding over the Campagna, devastating the suburbs, and insulting the sentries guarding the gates of the city.

Pope Gregory appealed to the exarch at Ravenna for help, but that official was unable to do more than maintain his own position, which was also threatened. There were frequent consultations between the Pope and his clerical advisers and the leading patricians.

The outlook was most serious. At last it was determined that an embassy should be sent to Constantinople to represent to the Emperor Maurice the absolute necessity for making efficient arrangements to supply Rome with corn, and to entreat him to send an army to drive back the Lombards and put a stop to their incessant inroads, which were desolating Southern Italy. Symmachus Boethius and Pamphronius were requested to be the ambassadors, and after some pressure from the Pope they rather unwillingly consented, for it would be an expensive and probably a thankless service. They resolved to take several attendants, including the four English boys and young Bassus.

This startling and important news came as a great surprise to the little society. As yet they had never been separated. Oswith consulted Bassus, and told him that they must bind each other always to be steadfast friends, in the most solemn manner possible. Their compact must include a firm resolution that when they returned home none should be left behind. He asked Bassus how this could be done with the most binding solemnity.

"It must be an oath to God," advised his friend, "which in the Hebrew tongue is Lilla. The most solemn thing that you can do," added Bassus, "is to change your name from Oswith to Lilla, as a memorial and a testimony. This will make the deepest impression on the rest."

For the last time before the separation all the boys assembled under the shady trees by the tank of the *navicula*. Much sorrow was expressed at parting, but all anticipated wonderful things, and probably much good, from the visit to Constantinople. They all took the oath of constant friendship, and that no one should be left behind when they fought their way home. "It is the oath of God," said Oswith, "and to impress it on our hearts, from henceforth my name shall be Lilla." "We declare," they all answered, "that we will call you Lilla for evermore as a testimony of our compact." They embraced each other. Little Sivel parted from his adopted brother Forthere with bitter tears. All took tender farewells of Hereric the Atheling, whom they fondly loved, of Forthere, and of Godric. It was a sad parting, but

they looked forward to meeting again at the same place.

A few days afterwards the two patricians embarked at Brundusium for Constantinople, accompanied by Lilla, Coelred, Porlor, Sivel, Bassus, and other attendants.

CHAPTER III

THE GLORIES OF THE EAST

At Rome everything reminded a visitor of past greatness. Constantinople, on the other hand, was the new Rome, the grandest and most magnificent city in the world. For nearly three centuries the revenues of the empire had been lavished upon her edifices, all the treasures of art had been brought from far and near to adorn her palaces and theatres, and her churches were decorated with marble and gold and every precious material the earth could yield. Her unrivalled position on the shores of the Propontis, her harbour of Chrysoceras (or the "Golden Horn"), and the beautiful wooded shores of the Bosphorus surrounded her with every charm and every luxury, and combined to make the city of Constantinople the most splendid capital ever raised by genius commanding unlimited resources.

After their arrival the Roman patricians had to wait some days for an audience with the Emperor. They had visited the capital before, but no one could ever tire of gazing on that unequalled architectural display. Boethius and Pamphronius walked through the city followed by their attendants; and the English boys, confused at the magnificence around them, were half dazed with wonder and admiration. They stood in the elliptically-shaped forum of Constantine, with triumphal arches at the two opposite entrances, and colonnades all round, filled with the statues of the gods, with shrines dedicated to Cybele and to Fortune, and a lofty pillar in the centre. This specially attracted their attention. It was 120 feet high, of marble and porphyry, surmounted by a statue of the Emperor Theodosius. Next they were taken to another forum, which was square and also surrounded by porticoes, with an elevated arcade adorned with statues, and the golden miliarium in the centre. The Hippodrome also filled them with astonishment, 300 paces long, and the space between the two goals filled with statues and obelisks. They saw

the wreathed column of bronze which bore the golden tripod of Delphi, and the Emperor's throne, with the winding staircase called *Cochlea* descending to the palace. They encountered palaces, churches, and baths at every turn; and were taken to see the underground cistern, or rather lake, with an arched roof supported on 336 marble pillars. Even more surprising to them were the baths of Zeuxippus, the most beautiful in the world, adorned with the greatest triumphs of Grecian art, the Muses of Helicon, the Athene of Lyndus, and the Amphitrite of Rhodes. It all seemed like a gorgeous dream which might suddenly melt away. When their eyes met, their looks told each other of their amazement, but they were too much astonished to express themselves in words. It was, however, the life and movement which made these scenes so striking and so vivid. Horsemen, foot passengers hurrying to and fro, troops marching, bright colours everywhere in motion, gave animation and interest to the marvellous buildings, so different from poor deserted Rome. They strolled on to the Golden Gate, and back to the Augusteum, where a

colossal equestrian statue of Justinian in an attitude of defiance absorbed their attention for a few moments, and then their eyes glanced beyond it to the crowning glory of his architectural work.

They had scarcely room for more wonder when they came before the great church dedicated to Divine Wisdom. Yet the interior, as they entered, almost took their breath away. St. Sophia had been restored and rededicated by Justinian about a quarter of a century before, in 563. The beautiful columns of green marble from Ephesus, of porphyry from Aurelian's Sun Temple at Rome, the ornaments and figures in carved stone, the decorations in gold and marbles of the most precious kinds, the walls encrusted with mosaics, the richly-carved capitals, and the exquisite proportions of the aerial dome, all combined to form the most perfect and beautiful church that had ever been erected. The gorgeous services, with long processions of richly-dressed priests and their attendants, solemn music and singing, and the delicious scent of incense, completed their wonder and awe. The boys remained in a sort of dream of astonishment for several

days, until the time arrived for the audience. The patricians were richly dressed, and their attendants, in suitably handsome attire, were to accompany them to the palace.

The Emperor Maurice Tiberius had ascended the throne in the year 582. Descended from an ancient Roman family settled in Asia Minor, he was born at Arabissus in Cappadocia, spent his youth at the court of Justin II., and afterwards served with distinction in the Persian war. His accession was due to the best of all reasons, his loyalty to his predecessor Tiberius Augustus, whose daughter he married. Maurice was forty-three years of age when he became emperor, and he was an excellent ruler, promoting the happiness of his people with sense and courage. He was a rigid economist, and his demeanour was cold and reserved. Soon after his accession another war with Persia broke out, and when the embassy came from Rome, the general Heraclius had just returned from Mesopotamia after gaining a great victory.

Rigid etiquette and a display of pomp and magnificence at court ceremonials had been introduced by Diocletian and had been

increased by successive emperors. The palace was a vast building on the shores of the Propontis between the Hippodrome and the church of St. Sophia. When the embassy from Rome arrived at the appointed time it was met by the Master of the Offices and his attendants, and the patricians, being of consular rank, were accosted with the title of "illustrious." After an interval they were ushered into the presence. The Emperor was in the great audience-hall called *Chalce* (from its brazen doors), which consisted of a dome supported by massy pillars, walls encrusted with mosaics representing African and Italian triumphs, and a pavement of many-coloured marbles. The imperial throne was surrounded by the great officers of state, and by favoured courtiers, all gorgeously dressed. There stood the Praepositus or Prefect of the Bedchamber with attendant Counts, the Quaestor or Chancellor, the Count of the Sacred Largesses, the Count of the Privy Purse, the Commanders of the Guards, the victorious generals Heraclius, Comentiolus, Narses, and Priscus, and several bishops. There also were Athanagild, a tall and handsome young

Gothic Prince, the philosopher Metrodorus, the famous physician Alexander, the lawyer-poet Agathias, and many others.

There were numerous presentations, and when the turn of Boethius and Pamphronius came, those illustrious patricians made low obeisance, and stated the case set forth in their instructions from the Holy Father Gregory, touching the sore need of prompt assistance in which the city of the seven hills then stood. They were told that they would receive their answer on a future day. Many eyes were turned on the handsome youths, whose good looks were enhanced by their rich and well-fitting clothes, and the patricians soon had reason to regret that they had taken those means of increasing their own importance by the brilliance of their suite. In leaving the palace the boys made way for Priscus the general, and they were struck by the revolting appearance of the soldier who held his horse. He was a short man with red hair and shaggy eyebrows, and his face was disfigured by a great scar. He looked a savage and malicious barbarian; yet this man was Phocas, the successor of Maurice as Emperor of the East!

whose monument, a tall column with an inscription, is still standing in the Forum at Rome.

During the following days the patricians received many visits. Narses, then one of the most trusted of the Emperor's generals, paid his respects, and took special notice of Lilla and Bassus. Stephanos, the Count of the Sacred Largesses, also came, and was very much attracted by the intelligent appearance of little Sivel. The Gothic Prince Athanagild was another visitor. He was a young scion of the royal house of Spain, who had taken refuge at the court of Maurice from the persecution of King Recared. Athanagild was also a grandson, through his mother, of Queen Brunehaud of Austrasia. During his exile he had formed a friendship with the physician Alexander, through whom he had heard of the Indian voyages of Cosmas. Fond of adventure, he was now keen to follow in the course of the old navigator, and was looking out for trusty followers. His eyes fell upon Coelred and Porlor, and he at once conceived a strong desire to secure their services.

It was too late for the patricians to regret

their imprudence in displaying their precious human property so openly; and just at this time Symmachus Boethius fell dangerously ill. The physician Alexander attended him, but his charms and amulets were of no avail. A few days after the death of his colleague, Pamphronius was summoned to receive his answer, and he was served with an order, through the Count of the Domestics, to bring the five youths with him who had been in the suite of the embassy at the former reception. The Emperor gave him audience at the lovely summer residence of Heroeum, a villa with gardens extending down to the sea, on the Asiatic side of the Propontis, near Chalcedon. Maurice was not encouraging. He said that he had ordered some ships laden with grain to be sent to the Tiber; but that he could give no military aid, owing to the disturbed state of affairs in Persia. The Emperor, indeed, told Pamphronius that he was himself on his way to Antioch with all the forces he could collect. His advice was that King Childebert of Austrasia should be bribed to invade Northern Italy and give employment to the Lombards. He also promised to instruct the

Exarch of Ravenna to co-operate with Childebert.

Pamphronius then had to take his leave; but before he embarked to return to the city he was informed by the Praepositus that the five youths were required for the public service, and would be detained at Heroeum. He protested strongly, but was merely told that he could, if he chose, recover them by process of law when their services were no longer under requisition by the State. Pamphronius returned to Rome with little but good advice as the result of his embassy, having lost his colleague by death, and his two slaves, for whom he had paid high prices to Mystacon, by an arbitrary act which, from his point of view, amounted to plunder. He felt very indignant.

Great preparations were, in fact, being made for a Mesopotamian campaign, rendered probable by the disturbances in Persia. The army was already on the march to Antioch by way of the Cilician Gates. Ships were assembled at Chalcedon and other ports, and the Emperor Maurice himself, with some of his principal officers and generals, was about to embark for the coast of Syria.

The boys had been lodged, with the attendants of the Emperor's household, in buildings near the gardens of Heroeum. They were able, thanks to their friend Bassus, to converse in Greek, and to understand what had taken place. They welcomed the chances that were now opening to them of taking part in some warlike adventure, and of emulating the deeds of their Viking ancestors, before again returning to Rome. Next day Lilla and Bassus were appointed to posts in the army, as pages in attendance on Narses. Little Sivel was taken into the household of the Treasurer Stephanos, who intended to employ the quick-witted and intelligent boy in one of the State departments under his charge, probably in the mint at Antioch.

Athanagild was of an enterprising and roving disposition, and on the death of his father Hermenegild at Toledo in 586, his uncle Recared succeeded, and he fled to the court of his grandmother at Metz. But a violent quarrel with his uncle Childebert led to his banishment, and he found safety with the Emperor Maurice. Having been nursed through an illness by the physician Alexander,

a close friendship was formed between them, and he thus heard of the voyages to India by the aged monk Cosmas, who was intimate with the physician. He had also been told of the great military exploits of Gollas, King of the White Huns, in those parts, and he resolved to find his way to that distant and unknown land, and to offer his sword to the conqueror. He had vague dreams of sovereignty and dominion for himself. His great object now was to find a pilot and a trusty crew to take him to India by the route of Cosmas. Alexander gave him friendly help and advice, and obtained for him a pilot in the shape of Monas, an old companion of Cosmas, who would find a vessel if supplied with funds. The Gothic Prince was now looking for two or three followers who would work under Monas, and whom he could thoroughly trust. He had taken a fancy for Coelred and Porlor at first sight. He admired their stalwart young limbs, and their faces with an expression open as the day, where no lie could find a place. He felt sure that, if once gained over, they would be loyal and true.

Athanagild was a tall, handsome young

man, with a winning manner, and when he told the boys that he was a Geata, whose deeds they had heard of in the song of Beowulf, he won their hearts. They remembered how often Coifi had sung of the Geatas and their exploits; and as they thought of the old hall at home, where the gleeman was wont to recite his tales, their eyes filled with tears. They were walking with the Prince in the beautiful gardens of Heroeum near the seashore, as he explained his plans to them. There was much that was wonderful, much that they could not understand. But they saw that it was an exploit worthy of the Vikings, and they joyfully consented to take part in it, on the understanding that they were to return with Monas. The two boys were handed over to the Gothic Prince with the sanction of the Prefect of the Imperial Bedchamber.

In less than a month the Emperor and his court were at Antioch, with a powerful and efficient army encamped outside the town. Coelred and Lilla agreed together that, if they returned from their expeditions, they would wait for each other at Antioch before starting for Rome. Sivel was already em-

ployed in the mint, receiving practical instruction in the art of coining the debased money which bore the name and effigy of Maurice, and they thought that they could safely calculate on his being still there when they returned.

One evening the boys were sitting together under the shade of some date-palms outside the city gate, discussing all the wondrous sights they had beheld, and their new experiences, when a great cloud of dust was seen on the road. Soon afterwards a brilliant cavalcade came in sight. It literally glittered under the rays of the setting sun, seeming to be one sparkling mass of bright weapons and gorgeous dresses. At its head rode a man in a long robe of cloth-of-gold, with flowing locks, and a huge globe of some light wicker-work gilded, surmounting his silver-gilt helmet. After a short parley he was admitted with his followers, and conducted to quarters near the palace. It was Khosro Parviz, the King of Persia, who had been driven from his dominions, and came to seek aid from the Emperor.

The reception of this King of Kings by Maurice was magnificent; and he consented

to employ his army for the restoration of Khosro. For several days active preparations were being made, and then there was a second separation of the English boys. As the army began its march under the command of Narses, Coelred, Porlor, and Sivel bade an affectionate farewell to Lilla and Bassus, who were well mounted and followed in the general's train.

Next day Athanagild took leave of the Emperor Maurice, and made sail for Alexandria with his young English followers, and half a dozen Gothic soldiers who had been the loyal and attached followers of his father. They were to travel from Alexandria to Myos Hormos on the Red Sea, where Monas had promised to meet them with a vessel prepared for the long voyage. When the Prince fled from Toledo, he had taken with him a large amount of gold and jewels sewn up in belts, which he had carefully kept by causing his servants to wear them, and which would now enable him to equip his expedition. He and his young friends were in high spirits when the long line of white buildings, the tall Pharos rising above them, and the rows of palm trees announced that Alexandria was in sight.

CHAPTER IV

A SON OF ALARIC

THE sun was pouring down its dazzling rays on rocks and sand, and on the expanse of intensely blue sea. There was nothing to relieve the eye except a line of white huts, and at some distance a grove of date-palms surrounding a well. One small vessel was at anchor. This was Myos Hormos on the Red Sea. Coelred and Porlor reclined in a shed roofed with palm leaves, near the well, while Athanagild and the Goths, drowsy with the heat, were lying about under the trees. Mounted on camels, and guided by a servant of Monas, they had crossed the desert during the nights, and had arrived on the seventh day at dawn. They now waited for the coming of Monas from the town. The boys were much changed in appearance. Their faces were bronzed by the sun, their hair close cut, and

large white turbans were wound round their heads. They were dressed in white, and were armed with swords, daggers, and spears. A chatty of fresh water and a little heap of parched corn on a cloth were between them.

Coelred's eyes were closed. He opened them drowsily and said, "With my eyes shut, and the sun making the darkness almost light, I fancy that I am lying on the grass, by the brook at Stillingfleet, and almost hear the voices of Bergliot and Braga, and the barking of dear old Shuprak at the top of the hill." Porlor looked at his brother, whose eyes were filling with tears, and lovingly stroked his cheek. "My thoughts and dreams are ever with our loved ones, like yours, dear Coelred. But we must keep wide awake for the next few days," and he shook his brother by the shoulder. "We have seen enough of our companions to make that quite clear." In a very low voice Coelred said, "What think you of Athanagild?" "The Gothic Prince," replied Porlor, in a whisper, "is a brave and true warrior, and will keep his word with us, I am sure. But he is not gifted with patience or judgment, and he

has embarked on an enterprise which requires both. He acts on sudden impulses, strikes before hearing a word, and his Goths follow and obey blindly. There is much to arrange now that needs forethought and care, and I feel that, although we are so many years younger, the success of this voyage will depend upon our conduct, and upon the character of the captain and pilot of whom we know nothing. In truth we have had several affrays since we landed in Egypt, and have escaped death or imprisonment mainly by good fortune, and all have been due to the quick temper of our chief." "We cannot always guide our own thoughts and actions," mused Coelred, "how much less those of our companions. So we must often leave all to chance; yet there are those who take all these things into account, weigh them, and give each its just value, and who can then offer sage counsel; and you are one, my Porlor." "I do try hard to think out the points on which our lives and fortunes depend," said the younger boy; "and truly I do so because one who is dearer to me than my own life shares my fate." They both sat

up and wound their arms round each other in a brotherly embrace. As they did so they became aware of people approaching the palm grove, whose figures stood out clear against the sky. The party consisted of an erect old man with a white beard, and some black servants. "If I mistake not, this is the pilot and guide of whom we know nothing, and concerning whom it imports us much to know a great deal," said Porlor. At the same moment Coelred cried out—"Prince Athanagild, a visitor approaches."

The Prince and his Goths sprang to their feet as the old man came under the shade of the trees and made a low obeisance. He introduced himself as the pilot and master who had undertaken to supply the vessel, load her with a suitable cargo, and convey the Prince to India. Funds had been duly received through the Imperial physician Alexander, and such merchandise had been purchased as there would be a demand for at the Indian port, and had been conveyed across the desert. The vessel was built at Adulis, and was owned by Monas. "Good," said the Prince; "we will sail to-day." "That

COELRED AND PORLOR IN EGYPT

cannot be," objected the old man, "for the ship is not ready and the cargo is not on board." "How long will be the delay?" "A week at least," was the answer, "and I have a long report to make." "I cannot rest here, and I cannot listen, old man. I must be at work. Action, not words, for me. I and my followers will hunt out these Arabs of the desert of whom I hear, and try their mettle while you make the ship ready." Monas protested, and explained the extreme danger of such a proceeding. "In ordinary times," he said, "there is nothing to plunder at Myos Hormos. But if the news gets abroad that a ship is loading or unloading, then indeed are the vultures gathered together. Clouds of Arabs cover the sands, and pounce down if the merchants have not sufficient force to resist them. I believe that our secret is well kept, yet the sight of you and your followers careering over the desert will at once bring the marauders about our ears." But the Prince would not listen to reason. He caused his led horses to be saddled, and his camels to be loaded with food and water, and set out with his Goths in the afternoon

in search of adventures. His last words to Monas were—"These Counts" (*Comites*), pointing to Coelred and Porlor, "are my lieutenants, and will act for me. Their wishes are my wishes, their orders my orders." So saying, this knight-errant rode away.

Monas held up his hands with astonishment at such madness. He turned round to look at the lieutenants, and saw a boy of fifteen and another of thirteen; well grown and intelligent, no doubt, and one struck him as possessing sagacity above his years, but both very young. "Counts!" he said aloud; but to himself, "Lieutenants! The Holy Saints protect us!" and he again held up his hands, with a half-despairing gesture.

This conversation had been carried on in Greek. The boys came forward, and Porlor requested the old man to make his report, and enable them to enter upon the duties with which their friend Athanagild had entrusted them. They did this with such a quiet assumption of command, and with such combined dignity and courtesy, that Monas almost ceased to feel the incongruity of such very juvenile Counts taking the command of

the enterprise, and at once entered upon his explanations and reports, with which he had come for submission to Athanagild.

Monas, in early life, had been a companion of the better-known merchant and monk Cosmas in his daring voyages. A native of Egypt, of Greek descent, his quick wit and readiness of resource had enabled him to establish commercial intercourse between ports of the Red Sea and of the west coast of India, after his master Cosmas had retired into monkish seclusion. He had acted as interpreter, when quite a young man, to the Indian embassy which brought a present of an elephant to the Emperor Justinian in 552, and he had since made several voyages to India. When the imperial physician applied to his ancient friend Cosmas, on the subject of the wish of the Gothic Prince to make a voyage to India, and forwarded a supply of money, the matter was placed in the hands of Monas. For Cosmas had quite retired from worldly concerns, though the famous geographer still survived, in a cell situated in a secluded oasis near Myos Hormos. Although the disciple was also contemplating

a retirement to a monastic cell in imitation of his master, he consented to undertake one more voyage. He owned more than one vessel at Adulis, and the most seaworthy was brought up to Myos Hormos, while the articles well known to Monas as finding a ready sale in the Indian ports were purchased in the markets of Alexandria, sent up the Nile to Thebes, and conveyed across the desert with as little delay as possible, in the hope that the Arab marauders would not hear that a ship was being loaded at the deserted port of Myos Hormos.

When Coelred and Porlor walked down to the beach, they found the ruins of a considerable town, and three or four sheds consisting of stone walls with roofs of palm leaves. The small cargo was stored in them, and the crew of tall blacks was loading a boat with bales. The boys, accompanied by Monas, went on board the vessel with the first load, and found her to be a craft the like of which they had never before seen. She had a half-deck and a small cabin. Her build was like that of the *pathamars* on the Malabar coast, the planks being neatly secured to each

other with knotted ropes, and she had two masts with lateen sails. Water was stored in large chatties carefully lashed to the ship's side, and the food, all bread and vegetables, was in sacks. The boys inquired whether there was any danger of an attack from Arabs, and Monas said that he hoped the wild young Prince would return the next evening at latest, in which case he was not likely to have encountered Arabs, and the risk would be averted.

Monas further said that it was necessary that the young Counts, as he called the boys, should visit the great navigator and geographer in his seclusion; and it was agreed that they should travel during the night. A short refreshing sleep was followed by a bathe in the sea when the sun set. Coelred, Porlor, and Monas then mounted their camels and proceeded over the desert in a south-westerly direction. After travelling for several hours, at dawn they came to a small grove of date-palms, where a stone cell of some size had been built, with a few sheds round it. This was the place to which Cosmas had retired to end his days.

On entering the grove, the visitors found a man in extreme old age, seated outside his cell almost in a state of coma. He had a long white beard, and must have been upwards of ninety years old. When Monas told him that his visitors were the adventurers who wished to undertake a voyage to India, he aroused himself. "They must consult me first," he said in a feeble but clear voice. "They must rest here and listen to what I can tell them. I am Cosmas," he continued, addressing the boys, "and my title is *Indicopleustes*, for I sailed to India. Give them food, and let them sit and listen to my words." Dates were set before them by a servant, and the garrulous old man continued to relate the story of his life. "I have been, in the years long gone by, a merchant who navigated the Erythraean Sea, and reached the distant ports of India. I knew the seasons, and taught Monas when the winds blew which would take us to India, and when he must spread his sails to return. It is said that Hippalus, in the days of Claudius the Emperor, first discovered the constancy of the winds in their seasons. It is true. But

the credit is mine of making this knowledge useful to the world. Now the rich products of India are sold in markets within the dominions of our Emperor. This is due to me. I know all the emporia and how to reach them. I was impelled by the desire of knowledge more than by gain, though there was gain. I discovered the royal seat of white marble at Adulis. It is consecrated to Ares. There are images of Heracles and Hermes sculptured on it, and Greek letters are written on every side. Monas helped me to copy the inscription, which was caused to be put there by the great King Ptolemy Euergetes. It is all in my second book. You have read my great work?" he asked. The boys answered that they could not read. "You must learn," he went on. "It is necessary that you should read my great work. It is in twelve books, and is entitled *Christian Topography.* When my career was finished as a merchant going to and fro, I devoted myself to God and became a monk. Then I wrote my great book. In it I have confuted Ptolemy and all the Pagans. I have proved that the earth is a flat surface. It is an oblong plain

twice as long from east to west as from north to south, and the holy city of Jerusalem is in the centre. The whole is enclosed by an ocean. I have proved it by arguments from Scripture, from the Fathers, from testimony, and from reason. There are many copies of my great work in the monasteries, in libraries, and in palaces. The Pagans are confuted." Porlor said that he would be glad if the holy monk would tell them about the voyage to India. "I am waiting for God to call me to begin a longer voyage," was the answer. "Monas knows all. I taught him." Cosmas had tired himself, and began to doze. The old man was not long for this world. He had done his work, which was to throw back science for centuries. The interview with old Cosmas Indicopleustes then came to an end, and the boys took their leave. They reached Myos Hormos a little after sunset, and were disappointed to hear that there was no news of Athanagild.

During the next few days the loading continued, but there was no sign of the Prince. At last he appeared alone, and wounded. He had had his wish. He had come upon a large

party of Arabs near a well in the desert, and at once attacked them. All his Goths were killed, and he received a spear-thrust, but the Arabs had not known the extent of the losses they had inflicted, and retreated under cover of the night. He thought, however, that he had been followed by one or two horsemen, perhaps more, and he knew not whither he was going, but his horse had brought him back to the port. He was faint from loss of blood. Monas declared that they would be attacked before morning, and he took the Prince on board the vessel to examine his wound.

Coelred and Porlor, after a consultation, made the black sailors build a sort of sconce or small fort with some of the remaining bales and other materials, with an angle pointing landwards, and the two ends resting on the sea when it was high tide. They also dug a trench outside in the sand, into which the water flowed. The remaining merchandise was brought inside this extemporary intrenchment, and the loading proceeded through the night. It was calm and the moon was up. A little before dawn Coelred, who was on the

watch, thought he saw dark figures cautiously creeping round the huts. The boat happened to be alongside the vessel, and there were only a few men and Porlor on shore. Coelred aroused them, and they all stood to their arms, when a sudden rush was made by a number of Arabs. The two boys stood side by side at the angle, with the sailors supporting them. Luckily it was high tide. There was a desperate struggle for the fort. The foremost assailants were hurled back by the young Englishmen with their spears. The brothers then drew their swords and began an unequal fight, supported by their men, who behaved well. More of the enemy came to the attack from behind the huts, and began to scale the enclosure. All would have been lost if, at that moment, the boat had not touched the sand. The boys retreated fighting, and were seized by their own people as the boat was shoved off. The marauders secured a small portion of the cargo, with the loss of several of their number. Two of the crew were also killed. As soon as Coelred and Porlor were on board, Monas weighed and made sail before a light northerly breeze.

The Prince's wound proved to be mortal. The loss of blood had been great, there was much exhaustion, and inflammation set in. The boys nursed him tenderly. On the third day he felt that his end was near. Porlor was supporting him, while Coelred held a cool bandage on his forehead. Monas had some skill, but the case was beyond human aid. He stood looking down on the little scene, amazed at the madness which had led to such consequences. "Farewell, my friends," said the Prince; "my folly nearly ended your lives as well as my own. You have become dear to me. I hoped that you would have been my companions in arms, and that we might have carved out an empire together. I saw that you were true and brave, worthy to be the comrades of one who is of the blood of Alaric." He paused, and his voice became weaker. He finished what he wished to say with difficulty. "I was driven from my country. Like you, I desired to return. One pleasure is left me. I can give you the means of going home." He looked at Coelred, whose cool hand, damped with water from a chatty, was on his forehead. "Take off my belt," he

said. The boy hesitated. "Take it. I would see it round your waist." Coelred gently unfastened the embroidered leathern belt, which was heavy, and did with it as the dying man had told him. Athanagild smiled as if contented. "Old man," he said, with difficulty turning to Monas, "thou art my witness that I leave all I possess to my young Counts. I charge thee to safeguard them." He closed his eyes as Monas bowed low before him in token of assent. After a long pause the Prince touched the belt and said, in his corrupt Greek, "I there place the treasure close packed in secrecy. Farewell." (*Ufaireo dia malki tote.*) These were his last words. The boys never forgot them, and ever afterwards used the first word, which they pronounced "*uvaru,*" for a secret hiding-place. Athanagild did not speak again, and passed away during the night.

The moon was shining brightly, and bathing the calm expanse of water with a silvery light, when the old man and the two young boys, with tears in their eyes, committed the remains of this impulsive and generous son of Alaric to the deep.

CHAPTER V

UJJAYANI

The sea was like molten silver. The burning sun blazed pitilessly down on the little vessel, which was motionless. The northerly breeze reckoned upon by Monas had failed him. They had been becalmed for days, and the water was running short. All day the boys were stretched out under a rough awning of palm leaves, panting for breath. The sky was like a dome of burnished steel. One night Porlor watched the northern horizon, and saw a bank of clouds rising, which he pointed out to the old pilot and to his brother. Soon cat's-paws were seen along the surface of the sea. Monas said there would be a breeze in the morning. But their water would not last them, unless they replenished at some well on the Arabian coast; yet this was a very perilous proceeding, for the eastern

side of the Red Sea was infested by savage robbers. There was, however, no alternative, and as soon as the breeze filled his sails, Monas steered for a port called Jidda, 320 miles south of Myos Hormos. They came to off a grove of palm trees, which denoted the presence of wells, on a bright moonlight night. A short distance to the south there were a few scattered huts. When dawn broke they could see that the wells were in possession of armed men. Monas feared to land, but the boys declared they would die fighting rather than die of thirst. Well armed, and accompanied by half a dozen of the crew, Coelred and Porlor took the boat, landed, and boldly advanced towards the wells. They were met half-way by a solitary Arab, who stood in the path uttering the word "Bismillah." He was a powerful young man, about five years older than Coelred, in a long camel's-hair cloth, with the hood secured round his head by a green band. His complexion was bronzed, nose aquiline, lips rather thick, and he had piercing black eyes. He held a long spear in his right hand. Coelred said in Greek that they must have water. The young Arab replied in

COELRED AND PORLOR ON THEIR WAY TO THE WELLS

the same language that the wells were in his possession. He said that he was Muhammad, the son of Abdallah, servant of Abu Taleb, one of the chiefs of the Koraish of Mekka. He was commanding an expedition against the robbers who attacked the caravans of Mekka, and had defeated them and driven them from the wells of Jidda. They should have water if they paid for it—let the master of the ship come to him. Coelred sent the boat back for old Monas, and the English lads stood facing the Arab youth, all leaning on their spears. Few more words passed between them. The Arab gazed at the young Englishmen with unconcealed admiration, and the lads scanned the features of the strange being before them with feelings of curiosity and interest which they could not have explained. Monas was very agreeably surprised to find a law-maintaining force at the wells, instead of the cut-throats he expected. It was soon arranged that the vessel should be watered and replenished with some provisions, in exchange for six bales of cloth. This occupied the rest of the day. Young Muhammad and the English lads rested under the shade.

The Arab's knowledge of Greek merely enabled him to strike bargains, and he could not converse, so that the time was passed, for the most part, in friendly silence. The undefinable feeling of interest which took possession of the boys when they first encountered this extraordinary man was increased as they sat near him. The expression of his countenance changed frequently, but was always remarkable. His eyes were bright and eager while he bargained with Monas; they had a soft and gentle look when they rested on the truthful faces of his companions; then again they once or twice flashed a look of fierce anger, apparently without cause. But what the boys noticed with most interest was that far-away, abstracted look which came into the Arab's eyes as he rested under the trees, as if he saw things invisible to all besides himself; and when this strange look came it lasted long. They had seen something like it in the Princess Alca, and once or twice in old Monas. But there was something in the Arab's look which was peculiar to himself: it was as if madness mingled in his strange abstraction; and when he shook it

off, it was with a glance of fury. The boys were quite absorbed by their companion, and when Monas called them away the sun was already on the horizon. They took leave of each other with solemn courtesy, and an hour afterwards the vessel was under weigh and sailing down the Red Sea with a fresh northerly breeze. The boys talked long over their encounter with this strange being, and never forgot it. The makers of England and the false prophet had this wonderful meeting before the serious work of their lives was begun. It taught the English boys to recognise a man with deep convictions, and to distinguish between real fanaticism and fraud. It elevated the fanciful conceptions of the Arab, and when he dreamt of angels he saw the faces of Coelred and of Porlor.

The breeze continued, the air was cooler, and Monas said that they would soon reach their next stopping-place, the emporium of Ocelis. By this time he knew the whole history of his young companions. They had never thought for a moment of turning back after the death of the Gothic Prince, but were quite resolved to complete their adventure

before returning to Antioch; and the old man, without any tie of his own, had become warmly attached to them. He would give them the use of his knowledge and experience, see them safe again on their way home, and then follow his master Cosmas into monastic seclusion.

Many a long conversation was held between the boys and their aged friend during the long starlight nights, when the little vessel made her way over the smooth sea to Ocelis. One night they talked of the young Arab and his look of abstraction. "It is the look," said Monas, "which betokens fitness for a life of seclusion, of devotion to prayer, and thoughts of eternity. The monks often have it, and the generation in which I live is one much given to a monkish life. It is only in such a life that we can find rest, safety from hell fire, and that religious truth without which there is no safety. In Egypt alone there are now six hundred monasteries, all maintaining the truth against the errors of Rome." "And what is the truth?" asked Porlor. "The truth is," said Monas, "that Christ existed *of* two natures, and whosoever

denies it shall for ever be accursed. The Synod of Chalcedon, when Marcian was emperor, declared that Christ existed *in* two natures, and this wicked heresy is still held by the priests of Rome, and sends many souls to hell. Dangers and pitfalls of false doctrine surround us, and the only safety from them is in monastic seclusion. Young and old should fly to the desert." "That will I never do," cried Coelred. "My life shall be active and earnest. I devote it to brave deeds and to the service of my countrymen." Old Monas shook his head, but he could not help admiring, and even approving, the very different direction to which the hopes and aspirations of his young friends were turned. They understood his words, but their minds were not trained to receive such subtleties. "Does Muhammad hold the truth," asked Porlor, "or is he, like us, ignorant of the true nature of the Son of God? We are ignorant because what you say is beyond our comprehension. How is it with that Arab warrior with the changing eyes?" "The Arab," said Monas, "is a very young man, and he is a heathen But he has been in Christian cities with

merchants of his tribe, and knows something of the truth. I talked with him in the shade while you slept." "We were not asleep," protested the boys. "Fast asleep," repeated Monas, "while I sounded the depths of the young Arab's mind. He is no ordinary man. He will either receive the truth and convert Arabia into a land of saints, or he will be the mightiest heresiarch with which the world has ever been cursed, spreading desolation and moral death over what once was Christendom. But not in my time," drowsily continued the old man. Coelred rose to take the helm, and Porlor followed Monas to the land of dreams.

It was not often that Monas kept the boys awake with such serious discourse. He generally related the stirring events in his voyages with Cosmas, taught them the rules of steering by the stars, and told of the famous book written in the time of the Emperor Nero, and called the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, from which Cosmas gleaned much of the information which enabled him to make his voyages successfully. The northerly wind soon brought them to the emporium of Ocelis, near

the strait of Dere, which opens upon the Erythraean Sea. Here they again took in water and provisions, proceeding along the Arabian coast to Kane, a port of considerable trade, where some of the merchandise was exchanged for frankincense and aloes. Sailing onwards to the east, they reached Syagros, whence, in accordance with the directions laid down by his master, Monas proceeded to make his bold voyage across the trackless ocean to distant India. The south-west wind, called Hippalus from the pilot who first attempted the passage by it, carried the little vessel across the sea until, in a few days, the coast of Guzerat was sighted, the mouth of the great river Narbada was entered, and Monas piloted her past islands and shoals, and anchored her off the *ghât* of the busy port of Barugaza.

Founded by the sage Bhriga, the town of Barugaza was one of the oldest seaports of Western India, and was then one of the chief seats of trade. Its exports were cotton, a kind of fine calico called *báftás*, bdellium, and flowers of the mahina tree. Barugaza is on an artificial hill 60 feet high overlooking the river, the only rising ground for many miles

around; for a flat alluvial plain of fertile black soil stretches away for fifty miles to the foot of the mountains, covered with crops of cotton and rice. Here and there a clump of mango and other fruit trees denoted the position of a village, and on an island in the Narbada there was a banyan-tree with 350 large and 3000 small stems, enclosing a space 700 yards in circumference.

There was much to astonish, much to interest, the English lads on first landing at the *ghât* of Barugaza. They had seen an elephant at Alexandria, but everything else was strange to them; especially the dresses of the people, the merchants in their snow-white robes and red turbans, and the crowds of coolies with nothing but a *dhuti* round their waists, carrying heavy loads, and taking cargoes on board the boats. Kesava was the name of the merchant who always acted as agent for Monas when he brought a cargo to Barugaza; and this was the fifth time he had made the voyage, without counting those in which he accompanied Cosmas. Before they were contaminated by intercourse with Europeans, the merchants of India were celebrated for their

probity and fair dealing; and Kesava was a good specimen of his class. Property could be entrusted to his care with perfect confidence, and he took charge of the vessel and the crew, while Monas and the boys were to convey their merchandise up country to Ujjayani, one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus, the famous capital of Malwa.

Monas set out on his journey a few days after his arrival at Barugaza. He and the boys travelled in open palkis, their bales of goods were slung on bamboos which were borne on the shoulders of coolies, and they were guarded by a well-equipped body of fighting men. They travelled up stream, along the right bank of the Narbada, for 180 miles, to a small town called Mandlesar, where the river is still 500 yards in width. Thence the route turned northwards across the Vindhya Hills for a distance of seventy miles to Ujjayani. Coelred and Porlor walked across the hills, travelling from midnight until sunrise, and on the third day from leaving Mandlesar they entered the far-famed capital of Malwa. Along this road the English lads observed that long lines of trees were planted to afford shade to

travellers from the scorching rays of the sun, while at intervals there were fountains by the road-side to enable them to quench their thirst. Porlor, especially, was deeply impressed with the excellence of a government which took such thought for the comfort of its people.

The city of Ujjayani was built on the right bank of the river Sipra, with *ghâts* leading down to the water. It was very extensive, and contained many grand edifices, besides the famous temple of Siva and the palace of the Raja. There were, however, more trees than houses. Every dwelling had its shady garden stocked with flowering shrubs, and round the city there was a broad belt of fruit trees, and avenues of the sacred *vata* or peepul trees, frequented by the Hanuman monkeys. Within this belt of foliage were the great tanks with bathing *ghâts* shaded by clumps of tall trees, above which rose the spreading fans of the palmyra palm and the graceful areca; while *palása* and *tulasi* shrubs, with their gorgeous flowers, concealed the bathers.

The golden age of Hindu literature was the period when Vikramaditya ruled at Ujjayani about B.C. 57, and when the "Nava-ratma" or

nine gems of literature flourished there. His dynasty still ruled over Malwa, and in 592 Jayachandra was the Raja. The place was full of traditions of the hero king, and of his divine poet Kalidasa, whose immortal works had the freshness and reality at Ujjayani which such poems can only really possess at the place where they were composed. The bright river Sipra, the flowering groves, the pretty girls descending the *ghâts* with lotas on their heads, the cranes in the paddy swamps—all nature reminded the votaries of Kalidasa that he dwelt at the court of Ujjayani when he wrote *Sakuntala*, the *Seasons*, and the *Cloud Messenger*. Peace reigned in Malwa, but there were threatening clouds on the northern horizon. Gollas, King of the White Huns, had overrun Northern India, and terror repeated marvellous stories of the prowess of his army, which included 2000 elephants. It was said that, when he besieged a town, his soldiers drank all the water in the ditch, and then marched dry-shod to beat down the walls. It was to this conqueror that Athanagild had contemplated the offer of his sword; but Coelred and Porlor had no such intention.

Ujjayani was to be the remotest point of their wanderings, whence they were to return homewards.

Monas was busily engaged in exchanging the merchandise for bales of small bulk, containing fine calico and muslin, valuable gums, spices, precious stones, and specie. Among his acquaintance there was an old Guru named Govinda, who had travelled far and spoke Greek. He was a man of profound learning though of Sudra caste, and was passing the evening of his days at Ujjayani, occupied in speculative studies. Govinda had taken a great fancy for the English lads, whose bright intelligence and simple truthfulness first attracted his regard. After their bath in one of the great tanks, they often passed hours conversing with the Guru, asking him questions, and listening to his wonderful discourse. He was generally in the verandah of a small garden-house near a large tank, which was surrounded by flowering shrubs, and shaded by a large *vata* tree. Here the Guru sat, an old man with a very benevolent expression and high intellectual forehead, clothed in snow-white robes, often with a bundle of reeds

forming a book, and a *kalam* in his hand. Coelred and Porlor reclined on a step at his side, listening eagerly to what he told them. The boys were in perfect health, being well cared for by Monas as regards clothing and protection from the sun and from chills, and living on a diet of rice and pulses duly seasoned, on fruits, and milk. They were thus able to enjoy to the full all the wonders of their sojourn at Ujjayani.

The Guru had told them many tales of Hindu gods and heroes. One morning the boys came from their bath with a quantity of crimson water-lilies, and a handful of the golden-coloured champaka flower, sacred to Krishna. This led Govinda to tell them the story of the *avatur*, calling Krishna the Son of God. They, in their turn, related the legend of Balder, and, after reflecting a while, the Guru said that Balder and Krishna were one, and that both were Christ. Remembering the conversation with Monas, Porlor asked whether this Son of God with several names, whom they all worshipped, existed *of* two natures or *in* two natures. "Both," replied the Guru, and this bold solution appeared at

once to sweep away the motives for religious disputes which sounded so incomprehensible to the boys. "Both, for whether of or in two natures, the incarnation of a deity embraces and contains, and in fact is, all that can be expressed by prepositions, and much more."

Then, descending from such sublime speculations, he said that he would relate to his young friends the sequel of the story of the Pandavas, those princes favoured by Krishna, including their search for heaven after a long life of adventures and vicissitudes. The Pandavas found that all the rewards of this life were vanity, and that they must seek for higher and better things. "We must all do likewise sooner or later, and meanwhile we may reflect on the story of the Pandavas," he went on. "There were five princes—Yudisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, and the two sons of Madri. They set out with their wife Draupadi and their dog Suparaka." "That is the name of our dear old dog at home!" exclaimed Coelred. "True," said the Guru, "for Suparaka is Yama." He continued—"The princes, with their beautiful wife and faithful dog, set out for the mighty

Himalaya Mountains, to find the heaven of the gods on Mount Meru." "Is not Asgard the abode of the gods?" interrupted Coelred. "Asgard is Meru," explained the long-suffering Guru; "but few can reach it, trusting in their own strength. Sins and moral defects prove fatal to the pilgrims. They toiled on over scorching plains and snowy mountains, tired and foot-sore. Draupadi was the first to fall." Porlor asked why she should be the first. "Her love for Arjuna was too great," explained the Guru. "Next fell one of the sons of Madri, for he thought that none was equal to himself; and the other son of Madri followed, for he had the same fault. Then Arjuna fell, because he could not fulfil his boast that he would destroy all his enemies in one day. Bhima fell, because he cursed his opponents before he encountered them in fight. Yudisthira and the dog Suparaka alone reached the gate of heaven. The Prince was invited by the gods to enter, but he refused unless Draupadi and his brothers were also received. He was assured that they were already there. But he still refused, unless the faithful dog Suparaka could bear him company. The gods re-

monstrated, but Yudisthira was firm. 'Never, come weal or come woe, will I abandon that faithful dog.' He prevailed, but when he entered he found that Draupadi and his brothers were not in heaven. They cried to him for help from hell. Yudisthira triumphed in the crowning trial. He resolved to share the fate of his dear ones in hell, rather than enjoy heaven without them. This was the supreme test applied by the gods. They then showed him that it was all *maya* or illusion, and the brothers, Draupadi, and the dog dwell in heaven with the gods, in full content of heart for ever."

Coelred and Porlor talked much over this story of Yudisthira when they returned that evening to their home with Monas. They loved the Pandu prince for standing by the good dog Suparaka, and they swore that they would imitate the steadfast loyalty of Yudisthira.

Thus the days passed on, while Monas completed his business, and the Guru related many strange tales to the English lads. One day, as they sat with him, a dark mass of cloud rose from the southern horizon, and moved rapidly

northwards across the sky towards the Himalayan snows. Old Govinda pointed to it, and said that it reminded him of Kalidasa's poem of the *Cloud Messenger*. "Tell us about it," said both the boys; and he related how Yaksha was banished for some fault by the god Kuvera, and was sent to pass the years of his exile at Ramagiri, near Nagpore, and to the south of Ujjayani, and of the Vindhyan Hills. One day he saw a cloud, the herald of the rainy season, passing to the north, just as the cloud we now see floats in the same direction. He prayed to the cloud to take a message for him, after discharging some of its moisture.

> With pinions swifter by the 'minisht store,
> Soon over Vindhyan mountains thou wilt soar,
> And Reva's rippling stream, whose waters glide
> Beneath their feet, without their rush and roar,
> In many a rock-bound channel, summer dried,
> Like lines of paint that deck an elephant's huge side.

The cloud passed on to this bright imperial city of Ujjayani, the pride of all the earth. It rested on flower-sweet terraces where women sit at open casements, while the air of the morning

Plays wooingly around the loosened hair
And fevered cheek—
Then, as it blows o'er Sipra fresh and strong,
Bids all her swans upon the banks prepare
To hail the sunrise.

"The cloud hurries onward on its journey," said Porlor, "but whither was Yaksha's message sent?" "It was sent," said the Guru, "to Alakà." "To Alca!" exclaimed both the boys, as they sprang to their feet in astonishment. Then, seeing the question in Govinda's eyes, they explained that Alca was the beautiful Princess of Deira. "We love her more than anything in the world. She knows everything. She loves all living things. She can disclose all the hidden mysteries of nature. She is our joy, our hope. Oh that the cloud would take a message to her from us! Shall we pray to it? Answer us, good Govinda."

The Guru looked at the eager faces of the boys. He then pondered for a long time. At last he said—"The Alakà of our religion is believed to be the abode or the heaven of the Gandharva on Mount Meru. The Gandharva is the being who knows and reveals the secrets of nature and divine truth, and prepares the

holy soma juice for the gods." He again paused to think. "Your northern Princess Alca is the same as our Alakà, the abode of the Gandharva of wisdom and truth, the depository of the secrets of nature. You do well to love her. Pray then to the cloud and it will take your message." The boys knelt down, praying long and fervently to the cloud to take their message. It was that they were well, that they had never forgotten her words, that they would return to her. The Guru assured them that they had not prayed in vain. They had never felt so happy since they parted from the Princess at Aldby.

Not many days afterwards they bade farewell to the Guru, who had become warmly attached to them; for Monas had completed his arrangements, the bales were ready, and they started on their return journey to Barugaza. The boys had offered their old friend a gold ring as a keepsake, which he declined. But when he saw them for the last time he gave them a small parcel as an offering for their Princess. "It contains," he said, "a very precious gum called bdellium, translucent and fragrant. It is a trifle by which to

remember me." "We shall never forget you, dear Guru," exclaimed Coelred; and Porlor declared that "Bdellium" should be their watchword and the watchword of their friends for evermore. Soon Ujjayani and the Guru, Barugaza and its busy *ghât*, were but memories. The north-east wind was taking their little vessel homewards again across the Erythraean Sea.

One night, as old Monas sat aft by the steering oar, with Coelred and Porlor near him, he asked the boys what they had been told by the Guru. Porlor was full of his praises, and repeated the stories of Krishna and of the Pandus; but something held the brothers back from mentioning the Cloud Messenger to the aged pilot. They declared that the Guru was the wisest, the most learned, and the most religious man in the world, and that he was beloved by God. "The strange and incomprehensible questions over which others quarrel for days and years, the Guru sees through and settles with a word. He is generous, and says that all men, more or less, are in the right way." Monas shook his head. "My friend Govinda," he said, "is learned

and good. It grieves me to the heart that he will assuredly be burnt in hell fire for ever and ever. Yet that must be his fate, for he is unsound on all points of doctrine." It was on the tip of Coelred's tongue to say he would go where the Guru went; but he checked himself, for the boys loved old Monas, and made it a point not to anger or annoy him. "Beware," he continued, "how you allow plausible falsehoods to sink into your hearts. You are very young and will be surrounded by dangers. May the Lord watch over you!"

On another night Monas explained their position to his young friends. "Thanks to Prince Athanagild," he said, "you are very rich. Your property consists of small bales easily carried but of great value, and of gold coins and gems. The crew will be amply recompensed by a present of the vessel and a generous distribution of money. We will land at Berenike, to which port the voyage is much shorter than to Myos Hormos. There camels can be procured, and the journey to the Nile will occupy three days. I will accompany you to Alexandria and see you embarked for Antioch. For myself I need nothing. I go

to the cell of my old master, who must now be dead, where I shall end my days happily, in prayer and in the contemplation of the true nature of the incarnate Word. Your destiny is very different. I am on the verge of the grave. You are entering upon life. You are brave and true. May the blessing of God be with you!"

It was very grateful to the old pilot to receive the warm thanks of his young friends, knowing how true and genuine they were; and the voyage passed pleasantly. The plans of Monas were admirably arranged. The crew was satisfied, the journey across the desert and the voyage down the Nile were performed without accident, and when Coelred and Porlor left Alexandria in the vessel that was to convey them to the port of Antioch, the last thing they saw was the white cloth with which old Monas waved his farewell from the Pharos.

CHAPTER VI

IRAN

SIVEL was a very intelligent and quick-witted boy, and he rapidly learnt all his companions could teach him in the treasury office at Antioch and in the mint. He was able to read and write, and had even tried his hand on the dies for stamping coins. The decadence of art had been very rapid since the days of Gallienus. All attempts at portraiture on the coins had disappeared, though there was still a head, and an angel with orb and cross on the reverse. It was not beyond the powers of a clever boy like Sivel to tool the inscriptions, and even to copy the rough effigy of the good Emperor. Not a few of the rude letters traced on Byzantine money of this period are the work of our English boy:

TI MAVRICIVS IMP AN IX COS
DN MAVRICIVS PP AVG,

or

DN MAVRIC TIBER PF AVG;

and he was thus busily employed when the news spread that troops from the Persian war were returning. Sivel lived, with several Greek clerks in the employment of the Count of the Sacred Largesses, in a large room opening on a court which formed part of the palace. As he worked one day, two tall forms stood in the doorway, and in another moment the delighted boy was wrapped in the tight embraces of Lilla and Bassus, who had returned unhurt from the war, and with license to proceed on their own affairs to Rome. Many days had not elapsed before Coelred and Porlor, with their small but precious bales, also reached the Syrian capital and found a safe place—an "*uvaru*" they called it—in which to bestow their goods for the time. The lads were beside themselves with joy at meeting once more, and they agreed that all, including Sivel, should embark in the first vessel bound for Brundusium.

They longed to hear each other's stories,

and when Porlor had related the particulars of the wonderful voyage to India and back, Lilla promised, with the help of his friend Bassus, to describe what they had seen during the Persian war. On the next evening they assembled under the shade of the grove of palm trees, outside the city gate, whence they had beheld the arrival of Khosro Parviz before their adventures began. Bassus first explained the cause of the war. "On the dethronement and death of Hormazd IV., King of Persia," he said, "there was great confusion. Bahram, the ablest of the Persian generals, gained over the army and seized the government, while the King's son, Khosro Parviz, took refuge in Roman territory. We all witnessed his arrival at Antioch from this very spot, and we know that the Emperor graciously resolved to restore the fugitive prince to the throne of his ancestors. He was influenced in making this decision partly by policy, but mainly, it is believed, by the generous dictates of his imperial nature. Our master in the art of war, the great General Narses, received the commands of the Emperor Maurice to execute his orders, and he planned the campaign with con-

summate skill. It was known that Bahram, with the Persian army, was posted in the Mesopotamian plain beyond the river Tigris, and not far from the foot of the mountains. Narses resolved that the Roman forces should enter Persia in two divisions. The General himself, accompanied by the King of Persia, led the main body from Antioch to the Tigris, while a Roman contingent, under the command of John, the Prefect of Armenia, was to create a diversion by breaking into the northern Persian province of Azerbijan. For Narses had carefully studied the science of tactics and evolutions under the eye of the Emperor, who was himself the author of twelve books on the military art. You saw the army commence its march, and we parted in the earnest hope that this happy day of meeting again would not be long deferred. Lilla must now tell you of our march."

The thread of the story was then taken up by the fearless son of Guthlaf. "As pages of the General," said Lilla, "we rode behind him, and encamped near his tent. For several days we had to traverse a vast desert, and we were often parched with thirst; but at

length we reached the river Tigris, passing over it near a great mound which, we were told, covers the ruins of the most ancient city in the world, called Nineveh. Crossing the river, our General made three rapid marches to overtake the Persians, who were encamped at the foot of the mountains. Then the wisdom of the strategy of Narses was made clear. Hearing of the march of the Armenian contingent, the Persian General feared lest it should fall on his rear, and he began a rapid march to the northward to attack it. But the Prefect John had strict orders to avoid an encounter; and eventually Bahram made a countermarch to cover the city of Canzaca, towards which Narses was steadily advancing. Leaving the plain, our way led us through the mountains of Media, to Sirgàn, on the plain of Ushneï, where a junction was formed with John's contingent. Three days afterwards a great battle was fought in a hilly country. For a time the Roman infantry fell back before the vigorous charges of Persian horse, and Narses himself dashed into the thick of the battle. We fought by his side, and when the

victory was won the General was so pleased with us that he gave us separate commands of infantry companies. Next morning Bahram continued his retreat over the mountains, closely pursued by us, and at night we pitched our camp close to the Persian position. Still retreating, the Persians descended into the plain in which their great city of Canzaca is built on a high rock. Here the final and decisive battle was fought. Bassus and I led on our men, and were long engaged in desperate encounters side by side. At last we saw the enemy flying in all directions. But we were too exhausted to follow them, and rested for three days on the battle-field. Our General then occupied the Persian city of Canzaca.

"Khosro Parviz was overjoyed. Our army had made him once more King of Kings, or *Malkân Malkâ*. He declared that the Emperor Maurice was his father, requested a contingent of the Romans to remain in his service, and promised great rewards to the rest. For a short time we were posted in the wonderful city where the people worship fire which has been kept burning

for 700 years." Porlor and Coelred had both been too absorbed in the story of the campaign to interrupt with questions, but now Porlor asked whether fire was really the god of those people. "Yes," said Bassus, "we saw them worshipping before it. Canzaca is on a hill which rises high above the plain, with a steep acclivity to the north and west, and a sloping approach from the east. The brow of this hill is crowned by a circlet of strong stone walls 12 feet wide, extending for a great distance, with an arched gateway also of massive hewn stone, leading into the town. In the highest part of the town there is a lake, 300 paces round, with exquisitely clear water of a deep blue colour, which has no bottom. And now I come to your question about the fire. Near the lake there stands a fire-temple—*pyraeum* the Greeks call it. Built of bricks and cement, its walls are of great thickness, and a narrow vaulted passage surrounds the central chamber. This chamber has a great arch on each of its sides, and is surmounted by a circular dome on which the stars of heaven are painted. A silver moon is on the highest point. In the centre of

this chamber is the altar with the sacred fire. We have seen the King, Khosro Parviz, enthroned there, surrounded by emblems of the sun and moon, with the golden globe on his head, while all his people prayed to the flame on the altar."

"We used to sit on the walls," said Lilla, "and look over a vast extent of country bounded by distant mountains. At our feet there was a winding rocky ridge, the height of two men and 80 paces long, called 'the Dragon.' We were told that the monster was coming open-mouthed to devour the city when it was suddenly transformed into stone by the potent spell of the signet ring of an ancient king they call Solomon. Certainly it was lying on the plain before us, like a winding serpent of stone. We were offered commands by the King of Persia, which we declined, and the General then said that we deserved some reward and might name it. So we asked for license to go to Rome, where friends urgently needed our presence, which was granted. Narses said that he was sorry to part with us when we took leave, and we set out with a small escort. We had to cross the Median

mountains to reach the plains of Mesopotamia, and in the pass my Bassus was so badly hurt by a fall with his horse that we had to remain at a place called Sideh for several days." "Did they also worship fire in that place?" asked Porlor. "No," said Lilla, "they had a stranger worship. They believe in an ancient bird called the Simùrg, which has been alive since the world began. Passing to and fro over the earth from the beginning, the Simùrg has seen everything. It therefore knows everything, and is a bird of great wisdom. Its counsel is sought for, but it is seldom seen, and its abode is believed to be on the mountain peak of Demavend. They worship a figure of the Simùrg made of silver, which we saw. It was on a raised platform, and has a swelling breast, small head, and wide-spreading tail. Two lamps are always burning before it, and close by there is a jug filled with water, to be used as a spell for the sick and afflicted when the Simùrg cannot be consulted in person. As soon as Bassus was well enough we left Sideh, descended into the plain, and, after a long and tedious journey, arrived at Antioch without further accident."

"How wonderful are the numbers of gods!" observed Porlor. "We have found people not only worshipping the Son of God under many names, but also bowing down to snakes, cows, and monkeys. Now you tell us that there are people who worship a flame of fire, and others whose belief is in an ancient bird. Many of their creeds are incomprehensible, but the Princess Alca will explain it all to us when we go home." Coelred warmly thanked Lilla and Bassus for the story of their campaign, which had been of absorbing interest to him, and for telling him and Porlor of all the wonders they had seen. A very happy evening had been passed under the palm trees.

The subsequent days were occupied in preparations for the voyage to Brundusium. A vessel had been hired at Seleucia and was ready to sail, when a great calamity overtook the friends. Little Sivel was missing. He had not been seen since the evening when Lilla and Bassus related their adventures. The other lads had taken leave of him in the street, but his companions in the treasury said that he never came home. Several days

were wasted in a vain search. At last Lilla remembered that, while passing through a crowd in the *agora* the day after his arrival, he for a moment caught sight of a face which reminded him of Mystacon. The incident had passed from his memory, being full of other exciting thoughts at the time. "I see it all!" exclaimed Porlor. The rest turned to him for an explanation, but he declared there was no time to explain, and that they must hurry down to the port of Seleucia. Porlor instituted inquiries at once, through the agent for their vessel, and sure enough Mystacon the merchant had been there. He had sailed, on his way to Rome, three days before. Further inquiry elicited the fact that some one, muffled up in cloths and gagged, had been carried on board.

"We are too late!" exclaimed Porlor. "We must follow quickly to Rome and effect the rescue there. For the villainy is unmasked. Mystacon has seen Pamphronius, who has offered large sums for the recovery of his slaves. He has found out that our Sivel was at Antioch, with his value greatly increased owing to his acquired knowledge and well-known ability, of which every one talks.

He has kidnapped our boy and taken him to Rome, with the object of extorting a heavy sum from Pamphronius, and he will probably keep Sivel concealed until it is paid." They were all wild with rage. "To the rescue! to the rescue!" they shouted. "Death to Mystacon and Pamphronius!" Their preparations were soon made. Next day the captain and crew were on board, the anchor was up, and the vessel was bowling along before a fresh easterly breeze. But it was a long stern chase.

The lads held many consultations during the voyage. Great caution would be necessary, for they were resolved not only to rescue Sivel, but also to kill Mystacon, and perhaps Pamphronius. Otacilia, the widow of Symmachus Boethius, who had always been very kind to Coelred and Porlor, and disliked Pamphronius, had manumitted all her husband's slaves. This news had reached Antioch. Coelred and Porlor, in order to be close to the scene of action, would therefore seek, and felt sure of obtaining, hospitality in the great rambling villa of the departed Symmachus. Lilla and Bassus would take up their quarters, as imperial officers, in

lodgings within the old Prætorian camp. Their friends at the monastery would be eager to help as soon as the news was told them. Then a watch must be kept on the Pamphronian villa, while Lilla was to visit his old master, and ascertain whether Sivel was already there. All the haunts of Mystacon were also to be searched, and further details were to be settled hereafter, as they must depend on the course of events.

Thus did these lads rack their brains to devise the surest way of rescuing their beloved companion. Coelred and Porlor were rich, and easily defrayed the expenses of the vessel, and of posting rapidly from Brundusium to Rome. It was early in the year 595 that the four lads returned. Six years had passed since the mortifying scene in the slave-market. Lilla and Coelred had now reached the age of eighteen, Porlor was sixteen years old. Both Coelred and Porlor were hospitably received by Otacilia, as they anticipated, and the heroes from Persia were lodged in the old camp. Next day they all hurried to greet and to consult with their comrades in the monastery of St. Andrew.

CHAPTER VII

THE RESCUE OF SIVEL

Once more the little society of English boys was assembled at its old trysting-place under the cypress trees, near the *navicula*, on the Caelian Hill—all but Sivel. When the first transports of joy at meeting again were over, they gazed on each other and rejoiced at the changes they saw, from weak boys to be sold and beaten, to powerful young warriors who were able to defend themselves. Forthere was nearly mad with rage and anxiety when he heard of the abduction of his young cousin. He had become a strong and muscular youth, a most formidable antagonist, as impulsive as ever, and otherwise unchanged—a vigorous foe, but a true and faithful friend. Little Godric was still a boy. Hereric had grown into a youth of singular grace and beauty. He was now sixteen, and he had an air of cultivation

and breeding, due partly to his high rank, but also to the knowledge he had acquired. He could read and write, and had become a sincere Christian. If he had a fault, it was that he relied too much on the probity of others, and was easily deceived by designing men. Forthere and Godric were devoted to the Atheling, as indeed were all his companions. No one could know the Deiran Prince without loving him. To the sons of Seomel and to Lilla he was almost a brother.

Hereric had startling news to tell. He had passed most of his time studying under Laurentius in the monastery of St. Andrew. But Forthere and Godric, refusing to work at books, were sent to Monte Cassiano, where they were employed in the fields or at the works connected with the extension of the monastery. They were often in trouble, owing to their decided aversion for the *Regula Monachorum* of St. Benedict; and they had recently been brought back to the Caelian Hill.

Gregory had not forgotten his intention to introduce Christianity into England, the land

of the beautiful children in the market-place. Three had been brought up in the monastery on the Caelian, and one at least would now make an excellent interpreter. He resolved to entrust the mission to his prior of St. Andrew, whose reward was to be the bishopric of the new diocese. Augustine was to be accompanied by Laurentius and Peter, Hereric and his two companions, and several monks and attendants. Letters were written to the Queens Fredegonda and Brunehaud for protection while passing through their dominions; and to Vergilius, the Bishop of Arles, to bespeak hospitality. Brunehaud promised also to provide an interpreter. Hereric had been told of the mission, and was, of course, delighted at so good an opportunity of returning home, provided that all his companions were equally favoured. But as the day for starting approached, the monks showed great repugnance to being employed on such a service. They were terrified, and although Augustine was not so faint-hearted, he looked upon the undertaking as being full of danger. The truth was that Forthere had been telling the monks such stories about England as made

their hair stand on end. The time was very near; for the departure of the mission was to take place on the very next day, the 21st of July 596.

When all the news had been exchanged, the boys were long in consultation. The plans for the discovery and rescue of Sivel were laid with care and circumspection. But Forthere was torn different ways. He could not endure leaving Rome with his adopted brother still in the hands of the villain Mystacon; yet his devotion for the Atheling made it equally hard to quit the mission and remain. Hereric settled the question. "Forthere, my more than brother, your duty is clear. Sivel is the adopted son of your valorous father, Brand of Ulfskelf. You must follow the quest for him until his rescue is achieved. The loss to me is greater than I can tell you. But our Godric is growing to be a man, and a brave one. He will be my faithful companion and true soldier in your absence." Young Godric's face flushed with pleasure, while Hereric and Forthere clasped each other in a long, silent embrace. "But," added the Atheling, as he gazed into Forthere's

eyes, "you must follow the rede of Porlor, and the guidance of Coelred and Lilla. Strike when they give the signal, but not before. Your blow is strong and sure. Let it fall at the appointed time, and not too suddenly, my Forthere. God bless you all, and may our next meeting be in our own land, with Sivel in our midst!"

It was clear that, if the boys accomplished all they intended, Rome would be too hot to hold them. Their course of action must be guided by events, but their general plan was to have horses always ready at the Symmachan villa, to overpower the guard at one of the gates when their work was done, and to join the army of the Lombard King. Thence they would make their way, by fair means or foul, to their native land. Coelred prevailed upon Hereric to take a good supply of money, and the Atheling also undertook to convey the small but precious bales from India, as part of his own baggage. It was the only chance of their reaching England.

Next day the mission left Rome. Pope Gregory offered up prayers, said mass at St. Peter's, and gave the monks his blessing. No

attempt was made to oblige Forthere to go when he refused. A more woebegone set of wretches than the monks of this mission could not be conceived. They looked miserable and terror-stricken. Augustine was supported by the importance and responsibility of his position, Laurentius and Peter were good men and true, but the rest were very poor creatures. Hereric and Godric, alert and armed, brought up the rear, and long did they wave their caps to their beloved comrades, who stood on Aurelian's Wall to see the last of them. Two days afterwards Augustine came back alone. The cowardly terror of his monks had so increased that they sent their prior to entreat the holy Gregory that they should not be compelled to undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. But the holy Gregory was inexorable. He sent back Augustine, telling them that "it was better not to begin a good work than to think of desisting from that which had been begun. It behoves you, my beloved sons," he went on, "to fulfil the good work which, by the help of our Lord, you have undertaken, being assured that much labour

is followed by an eternal reward. When Augustine returns, humbly obey him in all things." So the cowardly missionaries had to go on; but very few intended to trust their precious skins beyond Arles, or some other safe place for monks in the south of France. Forthere was much amused at the return of Augustine, believing that his stories had played a part in frightening the monks, whom he thoroughly despised.

Meanwhile the plans for the rescue were put in train without delay. On the first day Bassus and Porlor watched the approaches to the Pamphronian villa. Coelred searched the warehouses under the Aventine Hill, where they had all been confined when they first came to Rome. But the place was deserted. Lilla and Forthere went through every street and lane in the Suburra, scanning each face that passed them, but without result. Next day the rescuers were more fortunate. Forthere was again prowling in the vilest purlieus of the Suburra, when he caught sight of a face he recognised. Its owner was muffled in a cloak, which he drew quickly over his head, and ran at speed down a narrow lane. In

another moment the hand of Forthere was upon him. His struggles were unavailing, and he was dragged out into the open space at the foot of the Palatine, gagged, and bound. Forthere was almost certain that the face was that of one of the servants of Mystacon. The sun had set, and as soon as it was dusk the vigorous young Englishman half carried and half dragged his captive across the Forum, and down the Appian Way to the garden of the villa of Symmachus. Forthere shared a *cubiculum* in the villa with his cousins. In this little room he deposited the living bundle, and left him still more securely bound and gagged. He required the rede of Porlor and his other comrades before proceeding further. He found Coelred and Bassus watching the villa of Pamphronius, while Porlor and Lilla returned from fruitless searches soon afterwards. They all began to examine their prisoner.

The man swore that he had never seen his captors before, and had never heard of Mystacon; but they all recognised him, so he was turned on his back, a sword was put on his throat, and he was told that it would

be drawn across it if he told a single lie. They then found that Sivel had been several days at Rome, confined in a house in the Suburra; not ill treated, the man declared, but only kept secure. All this time Mystacon had been bargaining for the full price of Sivel to be paid again to him if he was restored, pretending that he was not actually in Rome. Pamphronius offered half the price. He was furious at the way his slaves had been taken from him, and would pay high for the mere spiteful pleasure of getting them into his power. A bargain had at length been struck, and Sivel was to be delivered over to his master the next day, after noon. The man was tied up again, gagged, and secured in the stable.

After a consultation, it was decided that the intended preliminary interview between Lilla and Pamphronius would be unnecessary. They now knew all they wanted to know. They would watch for the arrival of Mystacon and his victim, and effect the rescue by force. All the old fury that they had felt when they first heard that they were to be sold as slaves came back to them—the mortification and the

burning shame. Forthere was beside himself with rage at the thoughts of the old insults and of the danger to which his beloved little brother was still exposed. It would be a bad time for Mystacon when he next met the outraged lads. In the morning they looked carefully to their arms; and saw that the horses were ready for a start at any moment, with a small supply of food for each rider.

In the afternoon all five comrades concealed themselves behind a ruined wall, and kept careful watch over the villa of Pamphronius. It was thought better to allow the slave-dealer with his party to enter than to attack him in the road, where they might be interrupted. Forthere had a heavy club, the rest were armed with swords. All had long knives. After an anxious interval, they at length heard many footsteps. First came Mystacon himself, looking proud and self-satisfied, and it was with the greatest difficulty that Forthere could restrain himself from flying at the villain's throat. Then followed a closed litter, carried by slaves, and half a dozen armed men. The doors of the villa were closed, but when Mystacon knocked and

uttered the words "Servus Captus" in a loud voice, they were thrown open. The little procession passed in, and they were quickly closed and barred again. The boys rushed towards the doors, furious and baffled; but Porlor made a sign for silence. He then knocked in his turn and said "Servus Captus" in a loud voice. Again the doors were thrown open, and a tall slave appeared. Porlor flew at his throat, and the unexpected assault threw him off his balance. He fell without uttering a sound, and in another instant Forthere had cut his throat. They were now in the large deserted *atrium*. At the other end there were heavy curtains concealing the great hall, and behind them they heard voices.

The five lads pulled themselves together. They were well armed, but they were about to face heavy odds if the attendants showed fight. They drew their swords. "Ready?" cried Coelred, and the curtains were torn aside. Coelred and Forthere occupied the entrance, while Lilla and Bassus rushed across the hall to the opposite door, to prevent all escape. Porlor then advanced a little and looked round. On the right, at a table, were Pamphronius

and Mystacon. On the left was Sivel tied hands and feet, and held by two slaves, with half a dozen armed men behind them. To send the slaves flying and cut the bonds was the work of an instant. Porlor put his arm round Sivel, who flew to his side. The other four lads made a furious onslaught on the armed men. Lilla ran the foremost through the body, Bassus cut down another, and the rest threw down their swords and surrendered. "The first that moves is a dead man," cried Coelred, and Forthere proceeded to secure and gag them. Pamphronius and Mystacon remained to be dealt with. The slave-dealer's face was blanched with fear. Too well he recognised his assailants. But the patrician tried to put a bold face on the matter. "The Holy Father will make you all answer for this outrage," he cried. "Osvitus and Sivellus are my property. I have a right to recover them. They belong to me." This was more than Forthere could stand. To his astonishment Pamphronius found himself seized by the throat and dragged into the middle of the room. "Miserable wretch!" shouted the enraged Englishman. "Lilla is

the descendant of God, . Sivel is the brother of a goddess. Their fathers were brave warriors who could make a hundred such creatures as you run before them. You are not good enough to be their slave. Kneel down and ask their pardon, or I will smash your skull," and he raised the heavy club he had brought with him. The patrician had never been spoken to in this way in all his life. But he was in mortal terror, and did what he was told. "Shall I kill the niddring?" asked Forthere. "It is not necessary," said Porlor. So he was well tied up, gagged, and rolled into a corner. Then Mystacon was brought forward howling for mercy, and reminding the boys of all his kindness. "For you, vile wretch," said Coelred, "there can be no forgiveness. You had fair warning. We prayed to you to spare us from shame and humiliation, and you had no mercy. We told you then that we would kill you, and Englishmen always keep faith. You must die, and at our hands." He made a sign to Forthere, who ran Mystacon through and through, and he fell dead. "We could not have left Rome with honour," said Coelred, "until this was done."

DEATH OF MYSTACON

They all went quickly to the villa of Symmachus, and prepared to mount their horses. Coelred and Porlor had already explained what was about to happen to their kind old friend Otacilia, and taken their leave. "Will you be able to ride, my Sivel?" asked Forthere, as he tenderly embraced his recovered brother. "Anywhere with you," replied the boy. He looked very pale and ill. But there was no time to be lost. They hastily mounted, and, led by Coelred, they galloped down to the Asinarian Gate. The guard turned out, and was attacked furiously by the Englishmen. Two men were cut down, and the rest ran away for help. Bassus and Lilla dismounted to unbar and throw open the gates, and they all galloped out into the starry night. For several hours they rode on at a steady pace, but they did not appear to have been followed. So they stopped for a few hours of rest before sunrise, tethered their horses, and were soon fast asleep. Next day they continued to ride northwards, stopping at noon for a short siesta. All this time they had been too eager while riding, and too tired when resting, to consult much with each other;

and they were awakened from their noonday sleep by a great band of armed and mounted warriors who surrounded them. Roughly seized, they were almost in despair when they were dragged before the commander of this force.

But all turned out well. In the handsome warrior with huge drooping moustache Coelred was reminded of the Gothic Prince Athanagild. "He must be of our kindred," he thought, and spoke to him in English, saying that he and his companions were Englishmen, escaping from bondage at Rome, who threw themselves on his protection. The commander was well pleased, received the lads as his countrymen, and enlisted them in his force. It was quite providential that they should have fallen in with these Saxons, for they would be taken by them in safety within easy reach of England. A large Saxon army of nearly 20,000 men had entered the service of Agilulphus, who ascended the throne of the Lombards in 590. But they were not satisfied, and were about to return in a body to their own country on the lower Rhine. There was nothing to stop them, and a few months after

our English lads entered their ranks they commenced their march over the Alps, and down the course of the Rhine, a journey presenting physical difficulties, and of great interest, but involving no danger when in such powerful company. This protection continued until our young heroes found themselves on the shores of the German Ocean, facing their own native land. They had resolved to return from the first. They were always confident that the happy day would come. Alca had told them that they were not to die in a distant land. Now they were full of joyful anticipations. Her words, as they always knew, were true. The years of banishment were past and gone for ever.

PART III

WORK

So much to do that is not e'en begun,
So much to hope for that we cannot see,
So much to win, so many things to be.

L. Morris.

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF AUGUSTINE

Six tall young warriors landed one summer morning on the British shore, at Ebbs-fleet, in the Isle of Thanet. They were healthy, and strong, and goodly to look upon. The eldest was a dark Italian, the others with the fair hair and florid complexions of Englishmen. Young Sivel had quite recovered his health and good looks, and all were alert and ready for anything that might betide. It was the last year of the sixth century. Their eager inquiries were answered by the news that some Italian monks and two English lads had landed two years before, and had been allowed to establish themselves at Canterbury, the capital of the kingdom of Kent.

The Jutes who formed the Kentish settlement had been near neighbours of the English on the Continent, and like the royal houses

of Bernicia and Deira, the Æskingas of Kent were descended from Woden. King Ethelbert had succeeded his father Imeric in 561, and was now an old man, having reigned for thirty-eight years. He had married a Frankish princess, Bertha, the daughter of Charibert, King of Paris. They were an aged couple, and their son Eadbald had arrived at man's estate. Ethelbert, in spite of one crushing defeat which he received at Wimbledon from Ceaulin and Cutha of Wessex in 568, had been a successful ruler. Northwards his influence extended to the Humber. Sledda, the King of Essex, who married his sister Ricula, acknowledged his sovereignty, and he was received by all the English people south of the Humber as Bretwalda, or overlord. As the Queen Bertha was a Christian, she had always had a priest in attendance upon her, and Luidhard, the Bishop of Senlis, was now her chaplain.

The young warriors became acquainted with these particulars on their arrival, and, as horses could not be procured at once, they set out on foot for Canterbury. The first person they met, superintending some build-

ings outside the town, was their old friend Peter. He told them that Hereric and Godric were safe and well, and conducted them to the temporary monastery, where the Atheling and his young companion were soon embracing their friends. At length all the boys were again united. Soon they sat down round Hereric, to hear the story of his adventures.

"I and Godric," he said, "saw you all waving to us from the wall of Aurelian as we rode out of Rome, looking so tall and strong, and we were happy in the certainty that, if it was God's will, you would rescue our Sivel. It was a mournful journey, for the unwilling monks did nothing but sigh and groan with coward fear, for which our Forthere was partly answerable. The stories they told, on his authority, were enough to appal even brave men, which they certainly were not. At last they sent back the Prior to entreat the Holy Father to allow them to return to Rome. But Gregory's reply urged them to proceed, and the threats of Augustine obliged them to continue the journey. When we arrived at Arles, the good bishop Vergilius

received us most hospitably, and supplied us with the means of carrying ourselves and our goods across France. Here many of the monks feigned sickness, and declared that they could not travel. They were left behind, and others fell away when we passed through towns where there were convents with the Benedictine rule. Queen Brunehaud of Austrasia sent us a Frankish interpreter, but although I could understand him, he had no knowledge of English, and was useless in the interpretation of Augustine's Latin. We went over much of the road we all know so well, and at Amfleet our pitiful condition, when we stood shivering on the sand, came back to our minds.

"Forty very cowardly monks and servants left Rome. Only a fourth part embarked at Amfleet. The party consisted of the Prior Augustine, Laurentius and Peter, Godric and I, and five convent servants. We landed in the island of Thanet, which, as you saw, is separated from Kent by the river Wantsum, nearly a mile in width. All now depended upon us, for the monks could not speak a word to the people, and the Frank sent by Queen Brunehaud was of little or no use. I

proposed to Augustine that I should go to the King of the country, announce his arrival, and ask for license to land. The Prior consented, but enjoined me to conceal my rank and name. I rode to Canterbury, and was allowed to have an interview with King Ethelbert and his son Eadbald. The Queen was also present, and the Bishop of Senlis. They received me very kindly, and allowed me to keep my name and rank from them until a time when I could more fitly divulge it. Eadbald did not wish that the monks should be allowed to remain. But the Queen and her bishop strongly urged their cause, and I was sent back with a message that they might remain until Ethelbert had seen them, when they would hear further.

"I returned to Thanet, and, by order of the King, we were supplied with provisions and a house. Here were stored the precious Eastern bales of Coelred and Porlor, five books sent by Gregory, a cross and a picture, and some vestments. A few days afterwards the King came to Thanet, and, sitting in the open air, he ordered our company to be brought before him. He would not let us come into his presence under a roof, lest we should practise

any magical arts so as to impose upon him, and get the better of him. The Prior formed the most imposing procession possible under the circumstances. First he came himself bearing a silver cross in his hand, with Laurentius and Peter close behind him, carrying a board with the Son of God painted upon it. Next came Godric and I, while the five convent servants brought up the rear, singing a litany. The King ordered Augustine to deliver his message, and when I explained the royal words, the Prior began to preach in Latin until they all seemed weary, for not a word did they understand. He then told me to repeat what he had said in English more briefly, which I did, giving only the substance of his discourse. The King and those with him seemed very favourably impressed; and not only was permission granted for the monks to live in Canterbury, but a promise was given to supply them with all necessaries, and they had license to preach the new religion."

"All this was due to Hereric alone," interrupted Godric. "The Prior was so long and unintelligible that they were all weary of him, and I am sure that he and his monks

would have been sent straight back to France. But when the Atheling stood up, not stooping with a cowl over his head, but erect and graceful, with his golden hair waving in the breeze, the scene changed as if by magic. All eyes were turned to him, and every man present listened eagerly. His voice, as we all know, is sweet and pleasant to hear. He described the wonderful birth and the good works of Jesus. He related the events of His death with such feeling that the Kentish warriors swore great oaths, while Ethelbert sprang to his feet, drew his sword, and waved it over his head with excitement. The monks were terrified. The servants ran away, Augustine and Laurentius cowered down, old Peter alone stood his ground. They understood nothing, but heard the oaths and saw the old King with his drawn sword, vowing vengeance on the Jews. There was a long pause. Then, in a gentler voice, Hereric declared to them that the Son of God had risen from the dead to save all, of every nation under heaven, who turned to Him for comfort and help in the hour of death. When he stopped there was not one present, from the King downwards,

who was not willing to grant anything the Atheling might ask."

"Nay," said Hereric, "our Godric goes too far. I was but the instrument to convey Augustine's meaning in English words." "It was not the words," persisted Godric; "it was the gracious person that delivered the discourse, and the way he spoke the words, that won all hearts. Say, my brothers, who was it that deserves the praise?" "Hereric! Hereric!" they all shouted, Forthere more vociferously than the rest. "It is the partial voice of love," resumed Hereric, "which methinks is a little beyond reason. Say no more of me, I pray." "We must speak out," said Forthere, "for the jealous monks will not put thy name into their chronicle, it will be Augustine who did it all." Hereric looked distressed, and the subject was dropped. "We all marched to Canterbury," he continued, "and as we drew near the city, with the cross raised on high, Augustine caused another litany to be sung. We were temporarily lodged in a house, where the Prior at once established and put in force the *Regula Monachorum* of St. Benedict, in use at St.

Andrew's on the Caelian Hill. As the monks were unable to preach intelligibly, they had to be contented with good works for a time." "Yes," said the incorrigible Godric, "they have resorted to signs and wonders and miraculous cures. Augustine performed more miracles in the short time he was at Canterbury than he ever dared to attempt during his former life, under the eye of Gregory at Rome. I can work some of them myself." "So can I," added Forthere, "and I know very well how others are done." The Athelings took no notice of this interruption. "There is," he went on, "on the east side of this city a church built by the Romans, and dedicated to St. Martin, of whom we all heard at the Gate of the Twins outside Amiens, when we were in the power of Mystacon. Here the Frankish Bishop performs Christian services for the Queen. Here the monks say masses and baptize, and Ethelbert himself has submitted to the rite of baptism. But the people hold back, encouraged by Eadbald. Augustine himself is not here. He has hurried back to France to be consecrated by the Bishop of Arles; but

before he went he had obtained from the King the grant of another old Roman church, which he has dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, and where he has begun to build a monastery. It was there that you met old Peter, who is to be the first Abbot. I have promised to remain here until Augustine returns as Bishop, and until I have taught Laurentius and Peter enough English to enable them to preach to the people. Godric has promised to stay with me, and I know Forthere will also. You all need rest. Besides, our absence has been long, and we have heard no news. I have indeed received a rumour that Ella, our King, is dead, and that our country has been seized by the Bernicians. I fear that it will be a sad home-coming for most of us. Let us give ourselves a little time for preparation to bear our sorrows manfully. I would fain desire that we should all come home together." They unanimously agreed to wait for Hereric, and to go home in his company. It was a great joy to be together again, not only with no one missing, but with one more, the faithful Bassus, added to their company.

"At one time," said Godric, "I feared that our Atheling would become a monk, but now I know that he never will." "Wherefore?" asked the rest. "Because he is in love," replied Godric. Hereric blushed crimson when Godric went on to declare that the name of Braga was often on his lips when he slept. "Truly," said Porlor, "the Prince used to be very fond of our little sister. If he ever had a present to give, it was always for Braga. Do you remember, Coelred, the day when Alca came to visit us at Stillingfleet? That very day Hereric presented little Braga with a pretty scarf. I think it was the last gift she received from any of us." "Hereric is not the only one," said Forthere, wishing to turn attention from the Atheling. "Lilla is also in love, if words spoken in sleep are to be so explained. Twice have I heard him whispering the name of Bergliot." "'Tis true," said Coelred, "that the young Princess's last message was for our Oswith, when she left us on that fatal day." So the light talk went on, full of joyous reminiscences of home and friends; until Hereric said that they must all speak reverently of their loved

ones, if they spoke at all, until they knew certainly what had befallen.

During the days that they were waiting for Augustine, the companions helped Peter in his work at the monastery, and Hereric was a good deal employed in teaching English to the monks. In the long summer evenings they engaged in conversations. The most important took place a few days before they all set out for home, and was chiefly conducted by Porlor. He dwelt upon their peculiar position among their countrymen, and suggested rules of conduct. "We are like men apart," he said. "I have felt already in my intercourse with the Æskingas that there is a sort of gulf between us. Our knowledge is immeasurably greater than that of our people. This is not due to any merit of our own, but simply to what has happened. But it is a fact. We are as if we had been born in some later age."

"I do not think that Godric and I know very much more than our countrymen," said Forthere. "It is true," replied Porlor, "that there are differences amongst us. Hereric is as learned as any monk. Sivel understands the laws and the arts of the Greeks. Both can

read and write. Lilla and Bassus have acquired a practical knowledge of Roman strategy. Coelred and I have learnt much in our wanderings. Nor can Forthere and Godric be left out. They too have stored up knowledge in their travels and at Rome. No, Forthere; you and Godric are included in all that I shall say. What I feel is that our knowledge is a gift from above, but a gift that we must not use for ourselves only. It is a trust that we are to use for our people, and we must think how it can best be used. My fear is that if we openly proclaim our greater knowledge, if we suddenly begin to tell of what we know and to advise, if we assume that we are wiser than our people, we shall be distrusted, by many disbelieved, and our power for good will pass away. Remember Coifi. All men confess that he is more learned than any one else in Deira, yet who would listen to him in counsel or take his advice? He talks too much, and is without credit or influence."

The others thought a great deal over what Porlor had said. On the next evening Lilla continued the discussion. "We have," he began, "been gifted with rare knowledge and

experience, such as our fellow-countrymen can never possess except through equally extraordinary accidents. Our gifts are, as Porlor says, a trust to be used with great care for our country. I have thought long over the matter, and I believe with him that we shall lose the power we may surely gain unless we act wisely. What think you, my Coelred?" "My rede is," said Coelred, "that, accepting the counsel and the warning of Porlor, we should keep silence until such time as the knowledge that any of us possesses above that of our countrymen would be useful to them. Then we should use it, but even then by action rather than by speech. Such conduct will be very hard to adopt, and we shall need much counsel amongst ourselves." Hereric added that he agreed with all that had been said, except that the Princess Alca and their other loved ones must be told all they knew, withholding nothing. In this all concurred. Sivel asked Porlor to propose rules of conduct which might serve as laws for them in this grave matter.

Next day Porlor said, "I have been thinking carefully over a scheme for us to adopt.

We are dear friends, tried by companionship in danger, in sorrow, in shame, in hardships, and we know and are certain that our friendship can have no change for ever. We must make a compact to watch over our gifts for the good of our countrymen. We must often take counsel with each other how to maintain our credit and influence, and how to use our gifts prudently and wisely. We will be one body, devoted to the weal of our countrymen, but in a sense apart. We will form a *Gemót* of close friends and brothers for ever." The rede of Porlor was the judgment of all. They clasped hands upon it, and the Coelred-*Gemót* was formed.

Soon afterwards Augustine returned in all the importance of his episcopal dignity. His head was busy about the things pertaining to his office. Although as yet he scarcely had a flock, he promptly sent a long series of puzzling questions to Gregory about the degrees of kindred within which members of his flock might marry, and on other abstruse points. He also began to work miracles again, and to quarrel with the Welsh bishops about the calculation of the date of Easter. He did not

conceal his satisfaction that Hereric was about to leave him, which surprised the simple-minded Atheling, but which did not surprise Godric or Forthere. Hereric explained to the King of Kent that he was a Prince of the house of Deira, and Ethelbert ordered an escort to see him and his friends as far as the Humber. A message was also sent to London, to secure hospitality for them from Sledda, the King of Essex. Ethelbert wished them a cordial farewell. They also had a friendly parting from their old teachers, Laurentius and Peter, who gave their blessings.

They first rode to London, then sparsely inhabited, and saw the old Roman walls, the ruins of the temple of Diana on the hill, and the *miliarium* whence all the main roads diverged. Sledda and his wife Ricula received them well in the ruined old prætorium near the temple, and sent them on their way with a fresh relay of horses. In two days they came to the country of the Gainas, and reached Godric's home near the banks of the Idle. To the boy's great joy he found his old father Ulchel still alive, but failing, and their meeting was most pathetic. The friends were received

very hospitably, and Bassus, who was ill, remained behind with Godric until they should be sent for by Coelred. The rest pressed northwards, with pack-horses bearing the precious bales. They intended to proceed in a body to Bilbrough, and hear all the news, bad and good, from their kind old friend Saebald the Fairfax, before they ventured to seek their homes. Going rapidly along the old Roman road, they came in sight of the well-known Ingrish Hill with feelings of deep anxiety.

CHAPTER II

HOME AGAIN

Saebald, chief of the Billingas, had just returned from visiting his outposts on the Wharfe. He was standing at the gate of his burg when he beheld six horsemen and some pack animals advancing towards him up the hill. As they came nearer he saw that the men were fully armed and accoutred, but he could not guess who they could be. They rode up, dismounted, and stood before him. He looked from one to the other with doubt and astonishment, until his eyes rested upon Sivel, whom he recognised at once. In a moment they were in each other's arms, and Sivel spoke the names of his companions. It was long before Saebald could recognise his little friends in these stalwart young warriors. His surprise was extreme, but his welcome was hearty and cordial. He showed unfeigned joy

at their marvellous reappearance. "Knowing your friendship," said Coelred, "we came here first to hear from you all that has happened in our absence, for we know nothing. We did not dare to go to our homes, fearing to find empty hearths." He then very briefly told the story of the kidnapping, said that they had had many strange adventures, but that they had sworn to each other to come home together, and that at length they had succeeded. "Our stories will keep," he added, "but our anxiety is so great that we cannot wait longer for your news." Saebald insisted upon their having supper first, and then they went out and sat round the Billinga chief on the hillside.

"You have given me a melancholy task," said the Fairfax, "for I shall cause grief and pain to each one of my young friends. No anxiety was felt until you had been missing for two days. Then search was made in every direction, and vigilant watch was kept on the rivers. The Princess Bergliot was overwhelmed with grief, and told some story about the curse of a nixy, but neither she nor the dog could guide the search farther than to the mouth of Stillingfleet beck. Guthlaf stopped every boat

that passed up and down the river, hanging all the crews whose answers did not satisfy him. By this means many sea-thieves were disposed of." "But not our sea-thieves," said Porlor, "for they were all hanged by the Franks when we were landed." "At last," continued Saebald, "anxiety gave way to despair. There was mourning in many homes, for no boys were ever so beloved. My poor Forthere, your loss must be told first. Verbeia, your gentle mother, never held up her head again. She died of grief within a month." Forthere and Sivel bowed their heads to hide their tears. The eyes of the rest were full, for too surely they felt that worse was coming.

"Towards the end of the year," Saebald went on, "a great calamity befell Deira. Our King died very suddenly with suspicion of poison. Some looked askance at Coifi; for the dirge he chanted at Aldby when King Ella returned victorious from the borders of Elmet was remembered against him. Things looked even more suspicious when it was known that Coifi had taken refuge with King Ethelric of Bernicia. Ella was scarcely in his grave before news arrived that the King of

Bernicia was advancing upon York with a large army, led by his two fierce sons, Ethelfrith and Theobald. Elfric, the unconquered Atheling, hastily assembled a force to oppose them. The gathering was at York. I came first with the Billingas. Seomel, Guthlaf, and Brand, with their men, were close on my heels. But there was no time to wait for more. The Heslingas were to guard the Princess and little Edwin, the hope of Deira, at Aldby. Elfric then advanced to encounter heavy odds. Battle was joined beyond the forest. We were overpowered by numbers. First the noble Guthlaf fell, like a stag at bay surrounded by the dogs. Seomel was slain while valorously warding off blows from the Atheling. Finally, Elfric himself, after dealing death around him, bowed his proud head and breathed his last. Brand and I were fighting near, and when we saw that all was lost, we drew off our men. 'Edwin must be taken out of the land or he will be murdered. The sons of Ida are merciless.' These were Brand's words as we galloped towards York. The old warrior said he would go to Aldby and secure the child, if possible

inducing the Princess to come with him, while I placed relays of fresh horses outside York and at Tadcaster.

"Old Brand, as I have been told, broke the fatal news to the Princess, and urged upon her that there was no time to lose, and that she and Edwin must escape out of the country. She replied that her duty was to remain; but that she would entrust the child to her father's oldest and most faithful friend. There was no time to be lost. It was known that the Bernician army was marching rapidly on York. The Princess Alca folded the child in a tender embrace, and put it into the arms of Brand. 'Most valorous warrior,' she said, 'I entrust to your care the hope of Deira.' Her own resolution was immutable. Brand knelt and kissed the hand of the elf-maiden, then mounted his horse and galloped away. I waited with fresh horses on the Mount at York, and rode with them to Nehalennia's ford. There I bade farewell to old Brand, my beloved uncle, and swore obedience to young King Edwin, returning disconsolately to Bilbrough.

"Brave old Ingeld, with the Heslingas,

remained as a guard at Aldby. But they were not molested. Ethelric advanced to York, and, as resistance was unavailing, the country submitted. We had no Atheling to lead us. Hereric was lost, his brother Osric was a child. The Bernician King was an old man. He appointed Coifi Priest of Woden, with charge of all the sacred images at Godmundham. Four years afterwards he died, and was succeeded by his son Ethelfrith the Wild—a fierce, dangerous man, hating all opposition, and often false to his plighted word. He had twice asked for Alca in marriage, but had been repulsed.

"The Princess continued to live at Aldby, with the children of Elfric, Osric and Bergliot, the Lady Volisia, and her young daughters Braga and Nanna. Worn out with grief and anxiety, Volisia died a year after the coming of the Bernicians. Month after month, year after year, passed away, and nothing more was heard of Brand and little Edwin. One day an aged British priest, named Urien, arrived at Aldby and asked for an interview with the Princess. He came owing to a solemn promise he had made to Brand when he died in

Gwynedd. Urien brought up the boy after Brand's death, but one day Edwin said that he would leave Gwynedd, and go to a country where Englishmen dwelt. The boy departed, and Urien had heard nothing more of him. So the old man kept his vow, undertook the long journey to tell Alca, and then returned. The Princess remained quite confident that Edwin was safe, and all knew that she must be right.

"The last event I have to relate is the strangest of all. About a year ago King Ethelfrith again asked for Alca in marriage, and she consented on conditions. She sent for us, the surviving thegns of Deira, and said that she only lived for her country, and that she would consent to be Queen of Bernicia on condition that Ethelfrith would solemnly declare that Edwin was King of Deira, and that he only ruled until the child was old enough to assume the government. 'The King has consented,' continued the Princess, 'and is here.' Ethelfrith came into the great hall and made the declaration in our presence. He looked haggard and fierce, but cowed. Then Alca became his Queen. She has a

beautiful child named Oswald. Ethelfrith is devoted to Alca, but we all think that his devotion is more like terror than love. A glance from her stills his rage, and he almost cowers in her presence. Fierce, cruel, and suspicious when he is away from the Queen, her presence at once calms and softens him. All who are under her protection are safe. It is evident that he dare not molest them. It may be her goodness and purity which effect this change, but she must also possess some power which is incomprehensible to us. Thus we his enemies, the thegns of Deira, are not molested, though we must obey the King's summons to war. And now, my boys, my sad story is told. I see that you are overwhelmed with grief, and it is best that you should all seek rest."

The lads got little sleep that night. The wounds were too fresh, the grief too acute during the first hours. They wept long and silently over their lost ones and the desolated hearths. In the morning they besought Saebald to make their plans for them. He said that he would go with Forthere and Sivel to Ulfskelf. The other four should cross

the Ouse at Acaster, whence Lilla would visit his home at Hemingborough. "You must go to your homes at once," he said, "and assume your positions among your people. On the first of the next moon you shall all meet again at Stillingfleet, and thence fare onward to Bambrough, where the Queen now is. I will send a messenger in advance with the wonderful news of your arrival, to prepare her mind. The little girls, too, must not be taken quite by surprise. A great war with the Scots is threatened, so you must promptly offer your swords to King Ethelfrith."

It was so arranged. Hereric, Coelred, Porlor, and Lilla (Oswith) rode over to Stillingfleet, where Tanwin, the old and faithful servant of Seomel, had kept things in order and led the Stillingas since his master's death. He was overjoyed at the sight of them, and it was long before he could believe his eyes. Hereric and Coelred, he declared, were Elfric and Seomel over again, as he remembered them when they first bore arms. They went slowly up the hill to the deserted hall, their hearts too full for words. An aged dog was lying on a

heap of ferns in the yard. "Shuprak," they cried, and the faithful old dog raised itself on its forelegs, gave a joyful bark, and fell forward. The lads burst into tears. It was the last straw. When they ran up, Shuprak was dead. Tanwin said that it had lain for months without moving, and taking little food. They made its grave on the other side of the beck, near the place where it generally ran into the forest. As they covered its remains with earth, slowly and reverently, Porlor said, "Suparaka is Yama. We will not be less worthy than Yudisthira." The lads understood each other.

Next day the Stillingas assembled and swore that Coelred and Porlor were their leaders. Each ceorl walked past his chiefs and touched their weapons in token of fealty —the ceremony of the wapentake. Sad as it all was, it was necessary to give a great feast in the old hall. Lilla wished his friends to accompany him to Hemingborough, where the same scenes were repeated. The Hemingas crowded round the son of Guthlaf, and swore that Oswith (they did not yet know him by the name of Lilla) was their leader, also

performing the wapentake ceremony. They might well be proud of the splendid young warrior as he went round to each man, renewing the acquaintance of his boyhood. Again and again, both at Stillingfleet and Hemingborough, the tale of their disappearance, of the long-continued but fruitless search, of the despair of their parents, was repeated to the friends, with many details passed over by Saebald. They heard about the great battle in which their fathers fell, and were told of the numerous losses on the field, and of the sullen submission of the survivors, while curses were heaped on the head of Ethelfrith the Wild. Their homes seemed desolate without the loved faces of their dear ones and the welcome bark of old Shuprak. It was indeed a sad home-coming.

They were glad when, at the appointed time, Forthere and Sivel arrived from Ulfskelf, where they too had passed a mournful time. The gentle mother of Forthere had been killed by extremity of grief. Old Brand had died far away from home and kindred. The hearthstone was quite cold at Ulfskelf.

The six lost ones, found again, set out together from Stillingfleet and rode northwards into Bernicia. Pack-horses, with their precious bales, were in charge of old Tanwin and his son Froda, and of Ingebrand, the faithful servant of Elfric, who had now attached himself to Hereric. In three days they reached Bambrough, the capital of Bernicia. It was an almost impregnable place. The fortress rises up from a solitary rock of black basalt overlooking the sea. The building of Ethelfrith's time was constructed by his grandfather Ida in A.D. 550, on the site of a fort built by order of Agricola, and was named Bebbanburgh after his wife Bebba. The interior court was extensive, with a great hall of timber, and many rooms opening into the hall or directly upon the court. The whole had been surrounded by a quickset hedge at first, for which a stone wall was afterwards substituted.

Orders had been given for the suitable reception of the guests, and they were soon ushered into the presence of the Queen. Alca was more stately and more beautiful than when they parted from her at Aldby. Her

cheering words had sunk into their hearts, and had inspired their actions, keeping alive hope when their need was greatest. Coelred and Porlor regarded her with such devoted love that no one else ever found a place in their hearts. The adoration of the others was little less profound. She embraced them all as dear brothers returned after a long absence, but with no surprise. "I knew you would return," she said, "and I know by your looks that you have returned unscathed by sin or shame. You have returned, strong and bold and full of knowledge, to serve your country in its sore need. May the All-father bless and preserve you!"

Then the girls and little Osric ran in, and after the first warm greetings, Bergliot burst into tears at the thought of the last parting with her boys. The nixy's curse had always been ringing in her ears. It would cease now. She put her small hand shyly into her dear Oswith's large one, while Braga nestled close to Hereric, and Nanna tried to divide herself between her brothers Coelred and Porlor. The rest of the day was passed very happily, and on the morrow the young warriors

were to be presented to Ethelfrith at a great audience.

Ethelfrith sat in the hall, surrounded by his thegns. He scowled savagely as the young men came in and stated their names and positions, offering him their swords. But when Alca entered and looked at him with a calm searching glance, his mien changed and he welcomed them warmly enough, accepting their services with thanks. Next day Coelred sent for Bassus and Godric, who arrived at Bambrough soon afterwards.

In the following days the young men, one after the other, related all they had seen and heard to Alca in the minutest detail. They told her of their conversations at Canterbury, of their perplexities, of their proposed *Gemót;* and they besought her guidance and advice. The precious bales were opened before her and offered for her acceptance. There were gold ornaments of eastern workmanship, precious stones, spices, myrrh and frankincense, the small parcel of bdellium presented by the Guru, boxes of sandal-wood, fine calico and muslin, besides many bags of gold coin. She insisted upon Coelred and

Porlor retaining the money, and they afterwards dug a hole by the side of Shuprak's grave, which became the "*uvaru*" for their treasures. Alca kept the bdellium and a few things to please her young friends, and distributed the rest among the delighted girls. Alca had had described to her the whole realm of France; the buildings and people of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Ujjayani; the navigation of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red and Erythraean Seas, and the German Ocean; the habits and customs of many peoples; the religion of Christ, with Porlor's version of some heresies; and the religions of the Fire-worshippers and the Hindus; besides innumerable anecdotes and stories. In the minds of most people such an enormous mass of fresh and surprising information could not have been assimilated. It would simply have caused utter confusion. But it was not so with Alca. She told the boys that she would take a long time to think over all they had told her, and arrange everything clearly in her mind. When she had done so, she promised to take them into her counsels, to consult with them, and to let

THE YOUNG WARRIORS PRESENTED TO ETHELFRITH

them know her thoughts. But first they must all fight bravely in the coming struggle in which their country would be engaged.

Ædan, the King of the Scots, was assembling an immense army with the object of invading Northumbria and destroying Ethelfrith, his forces, and his kingdom. Ethelfrith's followers were very numerous, and both he and his brother Theobald were valiant soldiers. But they were ignorant of the art of war, headstrong, and without judgment. Alca consulted privately with her young friends. It was ascertained that Ædan would advance up the valley of the Eden, intending thence to pour his forces down the western valleys and converge on York. To defeat this plan Lilla and Bassus conceived the brilliant idea of imitating the strategy of Narses in the Median Mountains. Ethelfrith was to advance down the valley of the Eden with the main body of his army, while his brother Theobald occupied the mountains and threatened the enemy's flank, but with strict orders to avoid an engagement. Lilla and Bassus were to remain with the King and direct the campaign. Coelred and Porlor were to be at the head of

the troops gathered from between Ouse and Derwent. Saebald, Forthere, and Sivel were to head all the levies from the west of the Ouse. Hereric and Godric were to fight in company with the thegns and their followers from the east of Derwent. Thus all the Deirans would be with the King, as well as part of the Bernician army. The detached force of Theobald would consist wholly of Bernicians.

"But how are we to induce King Ethelfrith to adopt all these measures?" said Bassus. "Leave that to me," replied the Queen. "You and Lilla, as you have named our Oswith, are experienced men of the world. You now have to practise that forbearance for the cultivation of which you have resolved to take counsel with each other. Take care that Ethelfrith gives all the orders, and so manage as that he will think that they all originated from himself. Let him have the glory, and it will be well. It is sufficient for you to serve your country as brave and faithful warriors."

Soon afterwards there was a great assembly of chiefs in the hall of Bambrough to hear

the final instructions of the King. To the astonishment of Lilla and Bassus, they heard Ethelfrith make the following speech :—" I have conceived the plan of marching down the valley of the Eden to meet the enemy in front, while my brother with a picked force of Bernicians will threaten their flank from the mountains. But it is my strict and positive order to Theobald to avoid an engagement. Lilla and Bassus are to remain near my person. The whole Deiran force will form part of my division, and I shall have my eye on their chiefs, especially on the young men who lately offered me their swords. My plan is perfect, and victory is certain if our men do their duty. Prepare to march in a few days."

Ethelfrith believed that all the arrangements were originated by himself when the army set out from Bambrough in two divisions, to fight one of the most decisive battles in the dawn of our history.

CHAPTER III

DEATH OF ALCA

It was in the autumn of the year 603 that the battle was fought which finally settled the question of supremacy between Scots and English. Sivel had already introduced the system of counting time *Anno Domini* among the associates of the Coelred-*Gemót*, which was a valuable help to them, both in discussing the past and forecasting the future. This year was a great epoch in their lives. Lilla and Bassus were comparatively veterans. All the rest were about to fight in their first battle.

Ethelfrith's army was in the upper part of the Eden valley. It was known that a mighty host was being led by Ædan and by Hering the son of Hussa up the course of the river. Bassus had arranged with his friends that strong parties of scouts should be thrown

out to watch the movements of the enemy. They were led by Forthere, Godric, and Sivel. After a few days Forthere came back with the news that a large body of the enemy, apparently nearly half their army, had been detached, and was marching up the hills to the west. "Our plan works," said Bassus to Lilla, "just as the plan of Narses worked, our great master in the art of war." "But," said Lilla, "the King's brother is not another John the Prefect. The reckless Theobald will never avoid an action." An hour afterwards Ethelfrith sent a message to his brother with reiterated commands to retreat before the advancing foe. Then the English host, by rapid marches, hurried down the valley and attacked the weakened army of Ædan with overwhelming force. The result was never doubtful. The Scots were nearly exterminated, and Ædan fled almost alone from the field. After two days to rest and recruit their strength, the English warriors were fresh and ready to complete their work. Then a messenger arrived with the news that Theobald had refused to obey his brother's orders. He would retreat before no man, he declared.

He attacked the superior force of the enemy when weather and ground and everything was against him. He gave himself no chance. There was a desperate fight, followed by the death of Theobald and a prodigious slaughter of the Bernicians. But the Scots were reported to be much weakened and worn out with long marches.

"Now for the final blow," said Bassus. The scouts, under the direction of Forthere, kept him well informed of the movements of the enemy and the nature of the ground. The Scots were marching so as to expose their flank. At the right moment the English army was set in motion and came upon the enemy at a place which was long famous, called Degsastan. The remnant of the army of the Scots was here literally annihilated.

The news of this great victory spread over the island. It was thought that no leader so skilful and prudent, so wise and valorous, had ever been known in England as Ethelfrith the Wild. The fame of his generalship continued long. A hundred years afterwards the Venerable Bede declared that Ethelfrith "ravaged the Britons more than all the great men of

the English, insomuch that he might be compared to Saul. To him might justly be applied the saying of the Patriarch, 'Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.' He was a most worthy king, and ambitious of glory." Lilla and Bassus, the real generals, had far more precious fame in the praise of the Queen, and the full and ample reward of all the friends was in the approval and smiles of Alca. Bede says that "from that time no King of the Scots dared to come into Britain to make war on the English to this day."

For the next few years all the leaders in the service of Ethelfrith had much harassing work in repelling incursions from the direction of Strathclyde, and it became known that the King of Gwynedd was assembling a great army to stake his fortune where the Scots had failed. His standard was raised at Chester. Bassus was deeply impressed with the maxim that knowledge was power. He acquired a minute personal acquaintance with the routes across the moors to Chester. Forthere again commanded the bands of scouts,

and kept Lilla and Bassus well informed of the numbers and movements of the enemy. There was no difficulty in marching through Elmet, as old Certicus was neutral, indeed he had only too good an understanding with Ethelfrith. The English army was assembled at York. The Deiran chiefs were at the head of their people, who were more numerous than the Bernicians, the latter having suffered severely in the war with the Scots.

Lilla and Bassus explained their plans to the Queen, and a few days afterwards Ethelfrith announced them in council as his own. That wild King was managed with consummate tact. The march was made direct over the moors to Chester. The men of Gwynedd were found drawn up outside the old Roman camp of the 20th Legion. It was their colony of Deva. As battle was about to be joined, Ethelfrith observed a crowd of priests, who had come from the adjacent monastery of Bangor-Iscoed to offer up prayers for the soldiers, standing apart in a place of more safety. The King asked who they were, and Forthere told him that they were monks praying for his defeat, and that there was a guard to protect them,

commanded by a British chief named Brochvael. "If, then," said Ethelfrith, "they cry to their God against us, though they do not bear arms, yet they fight against us because they oppose us by their prayers." He ordered them to be attacked first, and then the chiefs of Deira charged the host of Gwynedd, and, after a long and desperate fight, the English gained a complete victory. About two hundred priests were slaughtered, and only fifty escaped, their defender Brochvael having decamped at the first appearance of danger. Their great monastery of Bangor-Iscoed was destroyed. The holy monks of Canterbury taught that the massacre of British priests at Chester was a sign of Divine vengeance on them for presuming to differ in opinion from Augustine on the subject of the time of keeping Easter. That charitable prelate, who died in 604, had already cursed them on the same account.

The victory of Chester was gained in 607, and from that time there was peace in Northumbria for many years. The Deiran thegns returned to their homes. Coelred and Porlor were at Stillingfleet, and Hereric was generally with them. Lilla and Bassus abode

at Hemingborough, Forthere and Sivel at Ulfskelf, and Godric was now at Markham, near the banks of the Idle, his father, Ulchel, having died. Queen Alca, in these latter years, passed most of her time at her old home at Aldby. She had her little child Oswald, and the charge of Osric the Atheling, both future kings. There were also several sons of Ethelfrid, fine little fellows, to whom she was very kind—Eanfrid, Oslac, Oswudu, Oslaf, and Offa, who adored her, and a little child named Oswy, recently born to Ethelfrith, but who was not her son. The King was almost always near the northern frontier of his dominions, making raids into the country of the Picts.

The friends often met at their respective homes, and discussed schemes for the benefit of their countrymen, who under their auspices were making considerable advances in many ways. But they always remembered the broad lines of conduct laid down by Porlor at Canterbury, and the friends frequently met to hold consultations. Coelred and Porlor having ascertained from Alca that, after investigation, she was convinced that Coifi was not guilty in

the matter of her father's death, received their old friend, who was now too great a man to act as gleeman at their feasts. His was not an estimable character. He asked innumerable questions, but the friends were not inclined to be communicative. He had to go on praying to his own gods, who never gave him inspirations, nor even made his spells work with effect.

Lilla's fondness for Bergliot had ripened into love. The fearless warrior was married to the Princess in the hall of Aldby in the presence of the Queen. They lived at Hemingborough, where the buildings had been enlarged and improved, and they were soon blessed with two sons, who were named Trondhere and Trumhere. At the same time Osric the Atheling married Elfleda, the daughter of Ingeld, chief of the Hemingas. They had a son named Oswin, destined like his father to be king in troublous times. From childhood a devoted friendship sprang up, and became stronger with years, between the Atheling Oswin and the two sons of Lilla. A year passed away, and there were two more marriages. Godric's prophecy came true. Hereric had really cherished

his love for Braga all through his long exile. He was diffident, but when he saw Lilla boldly seek the hand of Bergliot, he also told the story of his love. The Atheling Hereric was married in the hall at Aldby to Braga, the sister of Coelred and Porlor. He tried to persuade her to become a Christian, but she clung to the worship of Nehalennia, her mother's deity, and when the noble-minded Prince saw that the subject distressed her he desisted. They had two fair daughters, Hereswith and Hilda. Lastly, young Godric succeeded in winning the heart of little Nanna, and they also were married, going to live at Markham, near the Idle, in the country of the Gainas. Hereric and Braga lived at Stillingfleet with their brothers.

Alca became the guardian and inspiring influence of the Coelred-*Gemót*, which now included three wives among its members. At first, and indeed for some years, she had conversed little respecting the mass of information brought to her by her friends. But after the marriages she began to talk more on the subject, and asked many searching questions of Porlor and the others. One summer day they

were all in attendance upon the Queen, under that spreading ash tree at the foot of Garraby Hill where she had talked to the boys so impressively long, long ago. She then began to speak freely about the manifold wonders she had heard, and on the impressions they had made on her mind. "The Son of God has indeed risen to save sinners," she said with conviction, "as I have believed so long, and as the good man told you all outside the gate of Amiens. Balder has risen, for I see much goodness and true bravery coming back into the world," and she looked round at her warriors with an ineffably winning smile. "But I cannot think that Balder and Krishna were Christ, as the learned Guru told you, though I believe there was some truth in what he said. All that leads to good actions, from belief in the beautiful story of Balder, in the traditions about Krishna, or in the worship of Nehalennia, my sweet Braga, is of Christ, but it is not Christ. It is of Christ, because our Hereric tells us that Christ is all love and truth. By these sacred stories, in all languages, the peoples of the world, when they follow what is good and true in them,

are led to the Son of God, and are prepared to receive him. I think that all this is working, but very slowly, and that some day, when God wills it, all people will worship Christ. We cannot hasten this event, at least not much; but we can follow resolutely and humbly all that is good and true and beautiful in our own religious tales, which is following Christ, and some day we or our children will be called to enter into the full light." They all listened breathlessly, but did not speak.

Alca next turned to other subjects, and spoke, among many things that she touched upon, of the journey of the Pandus to reach Heaven. She reverted to this legend some days afterwards, and told them to keep the names of Draupadi and Suparaka always sacred in their *Gemót*. "The one is an emblem of the experience of all of us. We strive for higher things, but are borne down by our besetting sin. The other is a lesson how the humblest may find grace." Porlor asked her what the Guru intended to convey when he said that Suparaka was Yama. "Yama, or Adam," she said, "was the first

man, and represents humanity. I think he intended you to understand that the faithful dog, like human beings, had a soul to be saved." That day she ended the conversation by expressing thanks to the Guru. "He told you many beautiful tales," she said. "Always remember his kindly gift to me, and let 'Bdellium' be the watchword of your *Gemôt*."

On another day she pleased Lilla by telling him how fond she was of the story of the Simùrg. "We yearn for knowledge beyond our own experience, yet we can know little of what happened before our birth, and nothing of what will befall after our death. That there should be a being, coeval with the world, who has seen and knows all that ever happened, and who imparts her wisdom for the good of man, is a beautiful conception. This too is a seeking for the Son of God, and must work for good." Many other conversations of the same kind were held at Aldby, sometimes in the hall, at others under the shade of trees; and though at first absorbed in listening to the Queen, the friends gradually began to take more part, making suggestions and asking questions. All remembered these meetings

to the last day of their lives. The happiness seemed too great to continue. On one of the last evenings Coelred and Porlor asked the Queen whether she received their cloud message. "Yes," she said simply. "I heard the words in my sleep, and I think it must have been on the same day. They were—'We are well. We have never forgotten. We will return.'" They started with astonishment and awe, for they had not told her. "There are many things that we can never understand here," she went on; "but we shall know hereafter." Then came the far-away look they knew so well. She rose to retire, saying, "For me it will not be long."

They went home with some forebodings. Not long afterwards, towards the end of the year 612 A.D., the Queen gave birth to a daughter, who was named Ebba. In the following spring she was taken ill, and soon her attendants began to despair of her life. She said that she was dying, and sent for her friends. All her warriors were called into the presence. "When I die," she said to them, "Ethelfrith will be false to his promise. He will be under no restraint. All his evil passions will break

loose. He will try to exterminate the house of Deira. Swear to serve Edwin and to make him King." They all swore. "That is good," she said. "When I die, go to him with the Athelings. I think you will find him in Mercia; perhaps at Repton. Tell him I loved him to the end. Tell him that you are my dearest friends, and that you will be his servants until death. Farewell, my more than brothers." They bowed their heads in grief, and left the room silently.

On the next day Alca was sinking fast. At the last there were present with her Lilla, Coelred, Porlor, Hereric, Bergliot, Braga, and Nanna. They watched her pale but beautiful face while she slept. At noon she awoke and smiled. She looked at them all, and then her gaze rested on the Atheling. She said in a scarcely audible voice, but quite clearly—"My sweet cousin Hereric, let me be received into the fold of Christ." He quickly performed the rite of baptism. Soon after he finished she passed away. Her face was indescribably lovely in death. A veil must be passed over the intense grief of the mourners. If immediate action had not been necessary, they

could not have borne it. Alca slept the last sleep at Aldby by the side of her father, Ella the King.

Ethelfrith arrived two days afterwards, like a wild man as he was, all restraint cast aside. He roughly snatched little Oswald out of the arms of Bergliot, and sent all his sons to Bambrough. But he did not ask for Ebba, and Bergliot took the Princess with her to Hemingborough. Ethelfrith then swore that he would exterminate the royal house of Deira. "If Edwin is King," he shouted, "a dead man shall soon be King." Osric and his little son Oswin were concealed by Saebald near the crags above Nehalennia's ford. Hereric was in greater danger. As the eldest scion of the house of Deira, the usurper thirsted for his blood. He was at York. Coelred and Porlor, with Godric, who was their guest, remained for some days on their guard at Stillingfleet; Lilla and Bassus were in the same attitude at Hemingborough; Forthere and Sivel at Ulfskelf. One evening Hereric galloped into the court at Stillingfleet, accompanied by a single servant, his faithful Ingebrand. He said that an attempt had been made to seize him, and

that he and Ingebrand had fought their way through his assailants. But he believed he was followed. He was bleeding from a slight flesh-wound. He had determined to take refuge for a time in Elmet. His friends tried in vain to dissuade him. Taking a tender farewell of Braga and his two little daughters, he continued his flight with a strong escort of Stillingas led by Tanwin. But he dismissed it at the Roman road. Coelred had the rest of his men under arms. Next day a large body of Bernicians rode up to the gate, and demanded, in the name of King Ethelfrith, that Hereric should be surrendered. On receiving a defiant refusal, they assaulted the hedge. A fierce combat ensued, and the superior number of the Bernicians was beginning to tell, when they were suddenly attacked in rear. They broke and fled, closely followed by the Stillingas, who did execution upon them as far as Moreby. This diversion was caused by the return of the escort under Tanwin.

Next day there was a consultation with Lilla and Bassus. It was decided that the wishes of Alca should be carried out to the

letter. They must seek for Edwin at Repton. There was no reason to fear for their loved ones. The Angles, even Ethelfrith, did not make war upon women. The brothers opened the "*uvaru*" by Shuprak's grave and provided themselves with treasure. Bidding farewell to sisters and wives, full of high hopes and noble aspirations, Coelred, Porlor, Lilla, Bassus, and Godric crossed the Ouse and fared southwards into Mercia, well armed and mounted. They sent a messenger to Forthere and Sivel, arranging to wait for them at Godric's home near the river Idle, in the country of the Gainas.

Hereric and his escort had crossed the Ouse, by swimming at slack tide below the junction with the Wharfe. At the Roman road he dismissed the Stillingas, telling Tanwin that he would be wanted soon to defend his master's home. The Atheling and his servant then rode westward to the banks of the little river Cock, a tributary of the Wharfe, which they crossed by a bridge, consisting of a semicircular arch, a little above Tadcaster. Beyond, at a short distance from its left bank, there was a range of wooded

heights where the territory of Certicus of Elmet commenced. The range was a high bank rather than a line of hills, and the two fugitives made their way up it, and rode over some level country until they came to another bank covered with ferns and a great variety of wild flowers. The winding little Cock beck was again at their feet. Here the Atheling resolved to pass the night, and his servant made a hut of boughs for him. The place was afterwards called Beck-heigh (Becca)—"the hill by the stream." Next morning Hereric sent Ingebrand, who knew the language of the Britons, with a message to the King of Elmet at Barwick, which was about a mile distant. The Atheling announced his arrival, requesting protection and hospitality. The answer was a cordial welcome, and when Hereric reached Barwick, he found Certicus waiting to receive him with a crowd of natives. His palace was a large circular hut raised on a platform of earth, and the town consisted of a number of smaller huts scattered over the valley. One of these near the King's residence was assigned to Hereric. Certicus was a little man with a scanty white

beard, brown complexion, and small black eyes, which generally had a cunning, and sometimes a malignant, expression, in spite of his efforts to appear frank and affable to his guest. Hereric regretted that he had not remained at Stillingfleet. He had insisted on the course he had taken, lest his presence should bring trouble on his friends, and their efforts to dissuade him had been in vain. He now determined, on the first excuse, to take leave of Certicus and fare southwards in fulfilment of the wish of Alca.

Certicus sent meals and horns of mead to the Atheling from his own hut. A few days were passed in hunting. One morning Ingebrand reported that he had seen Coifi riding away before dawn. He had noticed a muffled stranger near the King's residence on the previous evening. This seemed very strange, almost unaccountable. Hereric remembered the suspicions of the gleeman after the death of King Ella. He had melancholy forebodings, without being able to assign any tangible cause for entertaining them. So he tried to shake them off, and went out hunting with Ingebrand and a few natives of Elmet to

attend him. Returning tired and thirsty to his hut late in the evening, some servants soon brought the usual meal and the cup of mead. The mead had a curious taste, and soon the Prince was seized with violent pains. "Ingebrand," he said, "my faithful friend, the treacherous Briton has poisoned me at the instigation of Ethelfrith. The Priest of Woden, the plausible Coifi, was not here for nothing." Ingebrand was devoted to his master, but, surrounded by enemies, he knew not what to do. There was a period of insensibility, followed by convulsions. Hereric spoke with difficulty. "Tell Braga," he said, "that I entreat her to be baptized with my children. Take my message of love to my dear friends. Tell them to remember the words of Alca, and to be loyal warriors of King Edwin." These were his last words. He died in the night. Next day the body was hastily buried, and Ingebrand was kept a close prisoner in the hut. But he effected his escape during the night, and reached Ulfskelf.

Hereric had been foully murdered, and in two days Ethelfrith was openly glorying over the crime. Forthere was nearly mad with

rage. He vowed that his avenging hand should rid the earth of both Certicus and Ethelfrith. But he could not bring himself to believe in the guilt of Coifi. Forthere and Sivel assembled all their followers and plunged into the wilds of Elmet, killing and destroying. They fought their way to Barwick, whence old Certicus had fled. Here they raised a small tumulus over the remains of the beloved Prince, and pressed onwards in pursuit of the murderer. At last Forthere overtook him, resting after a long journey, with a small escort. The old wretch then received his deserts. His skull was cleft by the avenger. The two loyal subjects of Edwin then led back their followers to Ulfskelf, bade them farewell, and fared southwards to join their friends at the home of Godric, taking Ingebrand with them. The peerless Atheling was partly avenged. Next it would be the turn of Ethelfrith to meet the avenger of blood.

Coelred and his friends had scarcely crossed the Ouse when the wild King arrived at Stillingfleet with an overwhelming force, and searched both the court and the various build-

ings for the Deiran Athelings. Edwin was beyond his reach, but he thirsted for the blood of the other three—Hereric, Osric, and Oswin. He then proceeded to Hemingborough and made a similar search in person, returning to York to receive news from Certicus, with whom he had long had a secret understanding, that Hereric was in his power. None of the ladies were ill treated, and though Ethelfrith saw his own daughter Ebba in the arms of Bergliot, he took no notice of her.

CHAPTER IV

EDWIN

In the depths of the forests of the upper Trent valley there was a wide clearing, and, near the river-bank, on a rising ground sloping gently inland but abruptly towards the bank, there was an extensive range of buildings erected round a large court, and surrounded by a quickset hedge. This was Repton, the royal seat of Kearl the son of Kinemund, King of the Mercians. Large bodies of men and many tethered horses were at the foot of the slope. Under the hedge, a few paces from the gate, sat a handsome young man about twenty-eight years of age, with his weapons thrown down on the grass beside him. It was evidently a time of listlessness and peace. He was playing with two little boys. He was making them go through their *idrottir*, or exercises. "Now,

Eadfrid," said the young man, "stand up by the side of thy tall brother Offrid." The little lads stood like small sentries. "Mark your distance, and pick up your clubs." This manœuvre was also successfully performed. "Offrid, whirl thy club; Eadfrid, raise thine over thy head and lower slowly." The boys went to work, looking delighted. After a time they began playing at ball, while their father looked on, encouraging them and laughing. Meanwhile there was a stir among the men at the foot of the hill, and presently seven warriors, splendidly accoutred, walked up towards the gate, which startled the boys at their play. The young man rose, and, to his astonishment, the strangers knelt down and saluted him as their King. He told them to rise and explain whence they came and who they were. Coelred, Porlor, Lilla, Bassus, Forthere, Sivel, and Godric stood before Edwin, the son of Ella. They gave him the message from his sister Alca, and said that they would fight by his side until he was restored to his throne, and serve him until death, for his own and his sister's sake. Edwin was a tall man, like his father and his

uncle Elfric, beautifully proportioned, with fair curling hair, and earnest eyes, which betokened habits of thought and reflection, unusual in that age. He received his loyal friends cordially, but without any strong demonstrations, introduced them to the Mercian King, and saw to their comfort.

At the first opportunity, Coelred explained the state of affairs in greater detail, and Edwin said it was right that he should put his position fully before his supporters. "You have doubtless heard," he began, "that I was carried off by old Brand when the Bernicians conquered my country. He took me to the land of Gwynedd, and found shelter and a home for me near the abode of a good old British priest named Urien, whose son was my playmate. The grand old warrior watched over my helpless childhood and my youth. But at last he began to fail and died. To him I owe my life and all the good that is in me." Coelred pointed to Forthere and said, "There stands the son of Brand of Ulfskelf." Edwin at once went up to Forthere, embraced him, and took both his hands, pressing them affectionately. "As my father

was to thee," said Forthere, "so will I be until death parts us."

Edwin proceeded with his narrative. "When I grew to be a boy, I remembered the stories of old Brand, and longed to be again among the English. So I bade farewell to Urien, and to my playmate Rhunn, his son, who was also intended to be a priest, and went to seek my fortune. They never tried to convert me to their religion—the British priests never do—and I worship the gods of my fathers. I will not weary you with the story of my wanderings and adventures. At last I sought protection from the King of Mercia. He received me, and treated me as a brother. I have fought for him in all his wars, and he gave me his sister Quenberga for my wife. She died, leaving me two little sons. I am now dependent on the will of my brother-in-law; my horse, even my arms, are not my own. I cannot even entertain my friends. How then can I hope to recover my kingdom?" "We have considered all these things," said Coelred. "We have not come empty-handed to be a burden to you. We have enough to equip a bodyguard of a hundred men, well armed

and mounted, with which our King may fight his way from one end of England to the other, and appear as a worthy son of Ella." Edwin went round and pressed the hand of each. "How can I express my thanks?" he said. "By using our services as you see best," they all replied. "But the time is not yet ripe for the recovery of Deira."

A few days afterwards Edwin called his followers together. "My brother-in-law, King Kearl of Mercia," he said, "has granted license to me to take a hundred men into my service. There are tidings from Wessex that the Britons are gathering together a great army to overwhelm the sons of Cerdic. Let us offer them our swords and fight for them, while the course of events in Deira ripens for action." The proposal was received with acclamation. "There is one thing only that troubles me, the care of my little sons. I dare not leave them here," he continued, "for if anything happened to Kearl, and his cousin, the savage and brutal Penda, succeeded, they would be as lambs in the jaws of a wolf." Godric then spoke. "My King," he said, "although I am a man of the Gainas, I am

married in Deira, and came with my friends to swear obedience to Edwin. I must return to my home, there to prepare the way for your march northwards at the appointed time. Entrust your sons to my care. I will guard them with my life. My place is strong, my followers are true. There will be no suspicion of their identity. They will be safe."

There were several weeks of preparation. Edwin bade a tender farewell to his little boys, who rode away with Godric. Soon afterwards he took leave of his brother-in-law, and fared southwards with his six paladins, followed by a hundred well-armed Mercian warriors.

The Gewissae had acquired their still disputed territory after a long and obstinate struggle with the Britons. When Cerdic and his son Cynric landed in 495 they had to fight on the first day. In 508 there was a great battle, in which the British king Natan-leod was slain with 5000 men. Cerdic did not assume the position of King of Wessex until 519; he fought another battle in 527, and conquered the Isle of Wight in

530. Dying in 534, Cerdic was succeeded by his son Cynric, who fought two desperate battles with the Britons at Old Sarum and at Banbury, before he also died in 560. His two sons Ceawlin and Cutha continued the struggle with great vigour. In 571 Cutha fought the Britons at Bedford, and captured the four British towns of Lenbury, Aylesbury, Benson, and Eynsham. Advancing westward, Ceawlin took the towns of Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath, and in a great battle killed three British kings named Comail, Candidan, and Farinmeail at Derham. He fought another battle at Frethern, taking many towns and vast spoils, but on this occasion his brother Cutha was slain. Ceawlin was deposed and put to death in 593, and his successor Ceolwulf had to fight incessantly, that the Gewissae might hold their own. In 611 Ceolwulf was succeeded by his nephew Kingils, or Cynegils, who, during his long reign of thirty-one years, did much to consolidate and extend the realm of Wessex. He was a grandson of Cutha, the brother of Ceawlin, who were grandsons of Cerdic. In some way Cynegils had his faithless and

truculent son Cuichelm associated with him in the government, and in 614 the two leaders were collecting all their forces to the north of the Thames, to repel a great invasion of the Britons.

Edwin, with his small but effective reinforcement, was received with great joy by Cynegils. Under the advice of Lilla and Bassus, the little force was formed into scouting parties, which were of immense use in keeping Cynegils well informed respecting the movements and position of the enemy. The two armies gradually approached each other at a place called Bampton. A council was held, and Edwin advised, at the suggestion of Bassus, that Cuichelm, who held a separate command, should be detached round some woods and swampy ground to make a diversion, while the Kings attacked the hostile army in front. Cuichelm whispered with his principal thegn, a fierce and savage-looking man named Eumer, and then spoke against the adoption of Edwin's advice. After a few more remarks from other thegns, he refused to move. His force was encamped on a rising ground apart from the main army.

"At least," said Cynegils, "I shall expect you to support me as soon as the battle begins." "Let your new friends support you," said Cuichelm brutally, and both he and Eumer scowled sullenly at the strangers. Eumer was heard to say, "Let us see if these new friends of Cynegils can win the fight without us. We will not help them." The Britons were advancing rapidly, and a few hours afterwards Cynegils led his army to the attack. The fight was long and obstinate. Without the aid of Cuichelm's force the Britons had a great superiority in numbers. Cynegils and Edwin were hard pressed. At one time their men began to give way, but they were gallantly rallied by the paladins and some of the Wessex thegns, and fought on with renewed vigour. Message after message was sent to Cuichelm for help, but he would not move. At length, towards sunset, the Britons began to retreat, but it was not until their retreat had been converted into a rout that the recreants led their men down and began the pursuit. It was a desperately-contested battle, and the Britons left 265 men dead on the field. Ethelwerd

gives the number of slain at 2040. Edwin, Forthere, and Bassus were wounded, the latter severely. Old Ingebrand, who had attached himself to Forthere since the death of Hereric, fell fighting by his side.

Next day Cuichelm and Eumer came to Cynegils to give an account of the success of their pursuit. Edwin was present, and before all the thegns declared them to be niddring and unworthy companions. The King of Deira was then assisted into his camping hut, while Cuichelm and Eumer cast looks of malignant hatred at the warrior they had treated so shamefully. The wounds healed under nature's treatment, and the patients were nearly in a state to resume work, when the King of Wessex paid a visit to his guest. He seemed ashamed and deeply moved. Thanking Edwin and his friends warmly for their most efficient aid, he entreated them to leave the country. "There is a plot against your life," he said, "and at this moment I cannot promise either to ensure your safety or to be able effectually to punish the guilty. If anything evil befell my guests while they were within my jurisdiction, I could not survive the shame."

Immediate departure could be the only answer to this appeal. Edwin, with his friends, fared northwards, wanderers and homeless. The treasure that Coelred brought with him was nearly spent, and it was necessary to pay and dismiss the Mercian body-guard. After a long consultation, Edwin resolved to seek protection from Redwald, the King of East Anglia.

The kingdom of East Anglia had been founded in about 495 A.D. by Uffa, a leader of the English, and closely allied to the Deirans, whose descendants were known as Uffingas. Redwald, who was a grandson of Uffa, had succeeded in 593. His dominions extended over the territory included in the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and the south part of Lincolnshire. Redwald was a sovereign of considerable capacity. He enjoyed great influence, and after the death of Ethelbert of Kent in 616 he was acknowledged as Bretwalda. Redwald received Edwin and his friends with hospitality. They found him at a fortified grange or country house near Sleaford, not far from the northern frontier of his dominions; and here

they continued to reside, sending messages to Godric, who assured Edwin that his boys were well, and that the Gainas and Lindisfarnas were being persuaded to join him, when he should advance northwards.

It was not long before the presence of Edwin and the great Deiran thegns at the court of Redwald reached the ears of Ethelfrith the Wild. He immediately sent messengers offering the East Anglian King a large sum of money if he would murder Edwin. Redwald indignantly refused. Soon afterwards a second embassy arrived with the same result. Then came a third embassy offering the choice of compliance or war. Redwald hesitated. Ethelfrith had the reputation of being the ablest as well as the most ruthless leader among the English, and he was very powerful. The King of East Anglia was fond of "hedging." In after years he had a chapel containing an altar to Christ and another to Woden, and he worshipped at both. He promised to deliver Edwin up to Ethelfrith's envoy or else to make away with him. The interview was secret and at night, but Coelred and Porlor had the eyes of lynxes in the

service of their master. Among the Bernician envoys they noticed one who was evidently disguised and ill at ease. They suspected him of being Coifi. As the envoys went from Redwald's presence to their lodging, the two brothers seized the man they suspected, hurried him under a clump of trees, and whispered "Coifi!" He trembled. "Coifi! we know you. If a hair of our King's head is harmed, we have sworn to kill you. Tell us everything, or this is your last hour." The wretch confessed all.

Coelred went at once to Edwin's chamber, where he was going to bed, and told him what was designed by his host. "If you see fit," he said, "we will at once take you out of this place, fighting our way if necessary, and conduct you to Godric's home, where the Gainas are friendly, and where you will be safe for the time." But Edwin had lost heart, and for the moment he was overwhelmed by his calamities. "I thank you for your good will," he replied, "yet I cannot do what you propose. If I must die, let it rather be by Redwald's hand than by that of any meaner person." Coelred retired, in great sadness,

to seek his brother, while Edwin dressed and sat against the outer wall of the palace. He was overwhelmed by many thoughts, not knowing what to do, or which way to turn. When he had been there a long time, brooding over his misfortunes in anguish of mind, he saw a person approaching in the dead of night. The stranger, coming closer, saluted him, and asked him "why he sat there alone and melancholy on a stone, at that time of night, when every one else was in bed and fast asleep?" Edwin in his turn asked, "What is it to thee whether I spend the night within doors or abroad?" The stranger in reply said, "Do not think that I am ignorant of the cause of your grief, your watching, and sitting alone without. For I know who you are and why you grieve, and the evils which you fear will befall you. But tell me what reward you will give the man that shall deliver you out of this anguish, and persuade Redwald neither to do you any harm himself nor to deliver you to be murdered by your enemies." Edwin replied, "I will give that person all that I am able, for so singular a favour." The stranger added, "What if I

also assure you that you shall overcome your enemies and surpass in power not only all your progenitors, but even all that have reigned before you over the English nation?" Edwin did not hesitate to promise that he would make a suitable return to him who should so highly oblige him. Then said the other, "But if he who foretells that so much good is to befall you can also give you better advice for your life and salvation than any of your progenitors or kindred ever heard of, do you consent to submit to him, and to follow his wholesome counsel?" Edwin did not hesitate to promise that he would in all things follow the directions of that man who should deliver him from so many calamities and raise him to a throne. The stranger then laid his hand on Edwin's head, saying, "When this sign shall be given you, remember this present discourse that has passed between us, and do not delay the performance of what you now promise." It was too dark for Edwin to make out the stranger's features, and he disappeared in the obscurity of the night.

Meanwhile, Coelred and Porlor had not

been idle. Porlor had found favour with the Queen's attendants, and persuaded them to prevail upon her to grant him an audience, even at that late hour. He told her what he had discovered from Coifi, and entreated her to save her husband from the shame of perpetrating such a disgraceful crime as was involved in the murder or betrayal of an honoured guest. She promised to do all in her power, telling Porlor to await the result without. Soon afterwards Redwald went to the Queen's apartment. His mind was not made up, although he had wished to satisfy the envoys. His wife now put the matter before him in such dark colours that there was a violent revulsion of feeling. His face was crimson with shame. He left her swearing that not only was Edwin safe, but that he would help him to gain his crown. The Queen then sent for Porlor, and told him the result of her interview.

Coelred and Porlor were overjoyed. They hurried off in search of Edwin, and as they came up to him, Coelred cried out, "Arise. Go in and compose yourself to sleep without fear, for the King's resolution is altered. He

designs to do you no harm, but rather to assist you with his power." "Was ever man blessed with truer friends!" cried Edwin, as he embraced the brothers. Next day Edwin related to Coelred his midnight interview with the stranger, which Coelred repeated to the other friends. Forthere greeted it with a loud laugh, and said, "I have seen a monk secretly prowling about, and I recognised him as one I had known before at Monte Cassiano. His name is Paulinus. Redwald allowed him to come, and listened to his discourses several times through an interpreter, but would not permit him to appear in the daytime. The King of the East Anglians wishes to keep on good terms both with Woden and with Christ. Hence this secrecy. The night bird has gone now, and will not be seen again. But mark my words. He is busy hatching a miracle." And Forthere laughed again.

The King of the East Anglians announced his intention of defending his guest, and, if the gods were favourable, of restoring him to his crown. But he said that Ethelfrith was a most formidable antagonist, and that he would give them but little breathing-time.

Redwald's fine young sons, Reynhere and Eorpwald, were sent to bring together fighting men as rapidly as possible. Messengers were despatched to Godric, for Lilla and Bassus felt that their hopes must rest on the result of Godric's work during the last year, and on the blunders of Ethelfrith. The news from Godric was excellent. Saebald had arrived at Markham with his Billingas and with the Athelings, Osric and Oswin. Blecca, the great thegn of Lindum, promised to join with the Lindiswaras, and the Gainas were stanch.

The Bernician envoys were dismissed with contumely and defiance. Ethelfrith was furious, and committed every blunder of which an angry man could be guilty. He summoned the Deiran thegns to York, and acted so suspiciously, and with such insolence, that they refused his summons to join him with their men, and remained neutral, if not hostile. Levies came in from Bernicia, and as soon as he had what he considered a sufficient force, the doomed King marched rapidly to the south. He committed the further blunders of despising his enemy and of taking no

trouble to ascertain his numbers or his plans. The wild King crossed the Don and marched across the country of the Gainas, direct for Sleaford.

"We must be satisfied with our present force, and with the aid that Godric will bring us, as time will not allow us to wait for further reinforcements," said Bassus, in consultation with the two Kings. "I know the wild King, and he will do everything in haste. We should advance rapidly to Godric's home at Markham, near the river Idle. There will the blow be struck." His advice was taken, and in two days Redwald's army was massed at Markham. Once more Edwin embraced his little boys, and saw his two cousins, Osric and Oswin, for the first time. With himself, the house of Deira now consisted of five male scions.

Lilla and Bassus laid their plans with admirable skill, leaving nothing to chance. The village of Markham is divided from the river Idle by a gentle rising ground. Godric and Blecca were placed half a mile to the north, with the Gainas and Lindiswaras, just below the rise, so as to be out of sight

from the river. Redwald's main army was to begin to appear on the rise the moment Ethelfrith reached the river-bank. This would make him hurry his men across furiously, and not until the last man was over was the advance to be made. The river was to be just in rear of the Bernicians. Scouts kept Bassus exactly informed of the enemy's approach. Ethelfrith despised all such precautions. Things fell out exactly as was intended. The wild King shouted and waved his sword when he saw the East Anglians appearing on the crest of the hill. They halted, and, directly the last Bernician was across, Redwald and Edwin advanced resolutely to the attack. Godric alone was visible on the sky-line to the north, and the excited Ethelfrith did not notice him. A desperate hand-to-hand combat commenced. Forthere was in the thick of it. He saw the Bernician King with the glittering gilded boar on his helmet, shouting and calling on his men. The Berserker rage possessed the son of Brand. Furiously dealing blows to right and left, he hewed his way to that gilded boar, and reached it just as Ethelfrith killed the brave young Reynhere and brutally

stamped on his body. The two warriors glared at each other. Forthere was a much younger and stronger man. "Niddring and murderer!" he shouted, as he beat down the wild King's guard. "That for Hereric, and that! and that!" and he dealt him three tremendous blows. Ethelfrith was on one knee, and Forthere ran him through.

At the moment when Forthere first descried the helmet with the gilded boar, Godric disappeared from the sky-line. By the time Forthere had crossed swords with Ethelfrith, the Gainas and Lindiswaras were pouring over the hillside and falling furiously on the enemy's left flank. When the wild King was seen to fall, the Bernicians tried to retreat. The river was in their rear, a fresh enemy on their flank. Very few prisoners were taken, and Ethelfrith's forces were nearly annihilated. Next morning Edwin bade farewell to Redwald in a speech full of graceful thanks. The voice of the East Anglian King was broken with grief. He said, "I have opened the road wide for you, my friend. I must now go home to bury my dead. Farewell!"

Lilla urged upon Edwin that if his move-

ments were prompt the whole of Deira and Bernicia could be secured as far as the Forth. Edwin fully concurred. Not an hour must be wasted. He thanked Godric and Blecca warmly for their effective aid, and marched northwards. At first his little force only consisted of Saebald's Billingas and some Gainas under Godric. But the march was like a triumphal procession. By the time he reached York the whole available force of Deira was under his banner. There was scarcely a halt. Osric was left in command at York to restore order, and the King marched rapidly northwards. At Bambrough he found that one of the Bernician thegns had taken all the sons of Ethelfrith and fled with them into the country of the Picts. Edwin lamented the loss of Oswald, his sister's son. Nearly all the other Bernician thegns came into Bambrough and promised obedience. He then advanced to the shores of the Forth, the northern frontier of his dominions. Here he established a settlement, and built a fortress on a high and impregnable rock. It was called Edwins-burg (Edinburgh). When he returned to York, Edwin was undisputed ruler

of the great united kingdom of Northumbria, extending from the Humber to the Forth.

The work was not yet done. But there were a few weeks of rest. Lilla was able to visit his beloved Bergliot at Hemingborough, bringing the little Atheling Oswin with him, to be brought up with his own two sons and the Princess Ebba. Coelred strongly advised that a final end should be put to the independence of Elmet, which had become a serious nuisance. He had been at Stillingfleet, and when he returned to the King he found that Coifi was in prison. The friends determined to intercede for him. They remembered the gleeman of their boyhood, he who had taught them the glorious song of Beowulf and all the northern lore, they remembered that Alca had acquitted him, and that his latest treason was atoned for by full confession. At their intercession Edwin contemptuously told Coifi that he was free to return to his images at Godmundham.

A large force was organised for the final conquest of Elmet. The King invited his cousin Braga to accompany him, to take part in a sacred duty. There was little resistance.

The Britons fled in a body towards Strathclyde, leaving the country to be settled by the advancing English. At Barwick-in-Elmet the small tumulus hurriedly raised by Forthere over the body of Hereric was found. The beloved remains were embalmed with the frankincense and myrrh brought from Ujjayani, and wrapped in the precious calico and muslin. All his companions, who had loved the Atheling so well, stood round the body of Hereric, with his wife Braga and his two little daughters. There was not a dry eye in the assemblage. King Edwin then ordered that the largest and highest tumulus in the land should be raised above the most noble and the most beloved prince of his race.

The King resolved to extend his power from sea to sea, and to include the Mevanian Islands in his dominions. Scarcely any resistance was made, and to Coelred was entrusted the conquest of the isles, he being the ablest and most experienced seaman in Edwin's service. Coelred and Porlor equipped a small but efficient fleet of armed boats at Chester, having brought over a number of good sailors from the Humber. Their expedition

was ably conducted and was most successful. The inhabitants of both the islands submitted, and agreed to acknowledge King Edwin as their lord.

When the sons of Seomel returned home, there was lasting peace throughout the vast dominions of Edwin the Great. The members of the Coelred-*Gemót* formed the seven firm and solid pillars which supported the edifice of his power.

At first the friends had served Edwin for his sister's sake, but they soon began to love him for himself. His good qualities were not on the surface. He was generous, unsuspicious, and not vindictive. His friendships were not quickly formed, but they were deep and lasting. He now looked upon his seven paladins as brothers. He was a man of rare ability and sound judgment. He was slow to form a decided opinion. He pondered long over what he was told, dismissing it from his mind and recalling it again two or three times, before he reverted to the subject and announced his decision. When a resolution was once taken he acted promptly and vigorously. He soon became devoted to his country, and placed the

good of his people before all earthly considerations; and he was endowed with rare gifts which enabled him to secure it. He had common sense surely guiding him to the right course, even when the materials for forming a sound judgment were incomplete or inadequate. He was far in advance of his age by reason of his genius, and not owing to the extraordinary accidents which raised his paladins so high above their countrymen in knowledge and experience. Such a man, with such marvellous assistance, could not fail to become a great sovereign. The friends had not poured their experiences into his ears at once and in full detail, as they did in the case of his sister Alca. After much anxious consultation they had only astonished him with a bare outline of their stories, reserving particular points to be explained to him in order to illustrate discussions on measures or decisions, as the cases arose. By this course they believed they would be most useful in the service of their King.

Aldby, his birthplace and the beloved home of his peerless sister Alca the Queen, became the favourite residence of King Edwin.

CHAPTER V

BAPTISM

EDWIN, about two years after his accession, resolved to take another wife, and he decided upon sending an embassy to the King of Kent to ascertain whether a proposal for a princess of his family would be favourably entertained. Sivel was selected for this delicate mission, and he proceeded to Canterbury in 619, where he was cordially received by King Eadbald, and by his old master, Archbishop Laurentius. He found that a number of changes had taken place in the years that had elapsed since he and his friends left Kent.

Two years after the boys set out for their homes, Gregory sent a pall to Augustine and a reinforcement of monks, including Mellitus, Justus, Rufinianus, and Paulinus, with vestments and ornaments for the church. A letter was also sent by the Holy Father to

Augustine, exhorting him not to glory overmuch in his miracles. They were becoming a little too numerous. This was in 601, and in the following year poor old Peter, having been sent on an embassy to France, was drowned in landing at Amfleet (Ambleteuse). Gregory died in 605, and near the same time Augustine had an interview with the Welsh Bishops in Gloucestershire. It was ostensibly on the subject of the correct way of calculating Easter, but it was really intended to force the native church into obedience to Rome. The overbearing Italian expected the British clergy to submit their judgment to his. He lost his temper, performed one of his miracles, cursed the British clergy, and kept seated when they appeared—all which proceedings worked irretrievable mischief. In 604 he ordained Mellitus Bishop of London, where Ethelbert's nephew Sebert, King of Essex, was willing to receive him. At the same time Justus was made Bishop of Rochester. In the next year Augustine died, and was succeeded as Archbishop of Canterbury by good old Laurentius. Ten years afterwards Ethelbert died, after a reign of nearly sixty years. Besides adopting

Christianity, he introduced a code of laws after the Roman model, which was written in English, and confirmed by the Witena-gemót of Kent.

Then there was a panic among the cowardly monks. The new King Eadbald refused to become a Christian, and the consequence was that the people returned to the faith of their fathers. The monks declared that, as a sign of divine anger, he was troubled with frequent fits of madness and possessed of an evil spirit. Sebert of Essex also died, and was succeeded by profane sons. They refused baptism, but wanted to eat the sacramental bread, and told Mellitus that if he would not give it to them he must leave London. These events were looked upon as alarming by the monks of Canterbury. They resolved to desert their posts and run away. Mellitus and Justus actually fled into France. Laurentius was about to follow, but ventured first to try a miracle. He had not been accustomed to resort to such practices, like Augustine, but he seems to have thought that a great occasion justified the means. He went to Eadbald, took off his shirt, and exposed some marks of recent

stripes on his back. The King was astonished, and asked who had dared to treat so great a man with such indignity. Laurentius gravely replied that St. Peter had come down from heaven and scourged him for his intention of leaving England. Strange to relate, King Eadbald believed the story, abjured the religion of his fathers, and was baptized. Henceforward he promoted the affairs of the Church to the utmost of his power, and the fugitives ventured to return.

Sivel gathered these particulars during his stay at Canterbury, regretting the proceedings of Laurentius. The King's sister was still very young, indeed the dates point to her having been a grand-daughter of Ethelbert. The monks also induced Eadbald to say that it was not lawful for a Christian virgin to marry a Pagan king. He, however, gave Sivel to understand that arrangements might be made which would remove this difficulty, if there was a similar proposal when the Princess Ethelburga was a little older. During the progress of the negotiations, Sivel had been busily engaged in procuring a copy of Ethelbert's laws, and other documents likely to be

useful to King Edwin in his administration. As soon as he was ready, he took a friendly leave of Eadbald, and visited Archbishop Laurentius to bid him farewell. Sivel had been grieved to hear of the miracle, and frankly said as much. "The Prior used to resort to those practices," he said, "but you never did." Laurentius replied, "My son, these matters are too high for you. Extreme measures are sometimes needed for the safety of God's Church." The old man was ill at ease. He had been the instructor of Oswith and Sivel, Coelred and Porlor on the Caelian Hill, and they loved him. "Alas!" said Sivel, "you used to tell us that God is truth." Laurentius bowed his head in shame. Sivel said, "My dear old master!" and put his hand affectionately on the Archbishop's shoulder. "Will you take my blessing?" asked the old man. "Thankfully," cried his former pupil, as he threw himself on his knees. It was a sad leave-taking. A month had not passed before Laurentius was no more. He was succeeded by Mellitus, who suffered a good deal from the gout. It carried him off in April 624, and Justus became Archbishop.

Sivel returned to York with an account of the results of his mission, and was occupied for the next five years in assisting and advising Edwin concerning administrative measures of various kinds. In 624 Edwin again sent his trusted minister to Canterbury to ask for the hand of Ethelburga. He was instructed to assure Eadbald that the Princess and all her attendants would have leave to follow their faith and to worship after the customs of Christians. He was even to hold out hopes that, if Edwin was convinced that Christianity was more holy and worthy of God than the religion of his fathers, he might embrace the new belief. This time no objection was made. Eadbald promised that the Princess Ethelburga should be sent to Edwin. But Sivel found that Paulinus, the very man who played the trick at Sleaford, which was exposed by Forthere, was to accompany the bride. Paulinus was ordained a bishop by Justus before starting, on 21st July 625. He is described as having been a tall man with a stooping gait, black hair, a meagre visage, and nose slender and aquiline. James the Deacon was also to accompany Ethelburga, a zealous and devoted

missionary, untainted with personal cowardice or timidity, and not addicted to tricks. When Paulinus deserted his post in the hour of danger, James remained and braved the storm. By the advice of Justus, the Pope Boniface IV. wrote a letter to King Edwin urging him to become a Christian, accompanied by a present of a shirt with one gold ornament, and a garment of Ancyra. Ethelburga received a silver looking-glass and a gilt ivory comb as papal gifts.

Sivel took his leave of Eadbald and rode with all speed to Aldby to announce the success of his mission. It was considered right that, as Paulinus was coming as bishop, the King should be informed by Forthere of the trick that had been played upon him by that holy person at Sleaford. Ethelburga came by sea, and was met by Coelred with a fleet of armed vessels to escort her up the Humber and the Ouse. The King was at York, where they were married, and then went to Aldby. The Kentish Princess was handsome, with a serious expression, and was very silent. She was surnamed "Tate." She received the admonitions and orders of Paulinus with great

humility, but at the same time she was devoted to her husband.

After about a year had passed away since the marriage, the arrival of an embassy from Wessex was announced to Edwin. To the general surprise, the envoy was no less a person than Eumer, the truculent thegn who, with Cuichelm, acted such a treacherous part at the battle of Bampton. Edwin ordered him to be treated with hospitality, and announced his intention of receiving him in audience on the following day. He supposed that Eumer came to give some plausible explanation of his master's conduct, and to offer amends. The King took his seat in the great hall at Aldby, with his thegns on either side of him, unarmed except with the *seax*, or long knife, worn at the girdle on the right side. Eumer was introduced, made a low obeisance, advanced up the hall, and came close to the King. He put his hand into his breast as if to draw out something to present. Suddenly a long dagger was flashing over his head and descending like lightning. But devoted love is ever vigilant, and even quicker than lightning. Lilla had flung himself be-

tween the King's breast and the dagger. The stroke descended with tremendous force, passed right through Lilla, and slightly wounded Edwin. In another instant the assassin had turned and plunged his dagger into the body of Forthere, who was rushing forward. The vile wretch was then cut down, and almost hacked to pieces.

Lilla and Forthere were dead, the two brave and most loyal paladins. Never did king have truer and more faithful servants, never were there more constant and unchanging friends. Bitter rage was mingled with the intense grief of the Deirans, from the King downwards. Lost in their prime, and in an instant! Such sorrow as is felt by men who have shared every hope and every joy, almost every thought, with the lost ones cannot be described. After the first agony was passed, Coelred and Porlor saw most vividly the stalwart little Oswith ready to wrestle with them on the green at Hemingborough, and the brave boy Forthere sinking exhausted from running and swimming, in the court at Stillingfleet. Then the whole array of gallant deeds and warm-hearted

LILLA SAVES THE KING'S LIFE

thoughts of their beloved comrades came one after the other to their minds and overwhelmed them with grief. Next followed a stupor, replaced by more sad reminiscences. The grief of Bergliot was heart-breaking, and Sivel could not be separated from the body of his beloved Forthere. Godric too had lost one who had been to him more than a brother, and Bassus was inconsolable, and went about with a settled sternness on his handsome features.

They buried the fearless son of Guthlaf, the bright boy Oswith, the unrivalled warrior Lilla, in the old Roman fort at Hemingborough. In after ages a beautiful church with a tall spire shooting up into the sky was raised on the spot—a fitting monument to Oswith the fearless, chief of the Hemingas. Sivel and Godric found a last resting-place for the body of their beloved Forthere in the tumulus of Vidfinn at Bilbrough.

On the same day, it was Easter Sunday, the Queen gave birth to a daughter, who was named Eanflaed. Edwin consented that she should be baptized at Whitsuntide. Twelve women and children of the Deiran family

were baptized at the same time. Braga had long felt remorse that she had not complied with the wishes of her beloved Hereric. She joyfully received the rite with her two daughters Hereswith and Hilda. It also gave Bergliot some consolation to be baptized with her two little sons. The wife of Osric came to the font with the young Atheling Oswin, and Nanna with the son and heir, named Edwin, she had borne to Godric. By the desire of Godric, Nanna was christened by the name of Mary, to which her husband added the word "Audr," to denote her rare gifts. The wife and child of a son of old Saebald made up the twelve.

"Now for vengeance!" said Bassus, with a stern inexorable look, as he stood before the King. "Now for justice," said Edwin, looking equally full of righteous anger. A carefully-selected force was assembled, well armed and supplied by the care of Coelred and Porlor, Sivel and Godric. It was in four divisions, one commanded by each of the paladins, while Bassus attended the King's person. Rapid marches were made across Mercia, where every assistance was offered,

and when the Northumbrians crossed the Wessex frontier they began to devastate, destroying buildings and crops, and beating down all resistance. They had nearly reached Sarum when a messenger arrived from Cynegils entreating an interview. Soon the King of Wessex arrived. He solemnly swore that he was innocent. He declared that if Cuichelm had not escaped and concealed himself, he should have been given up. He assured Edwin that he had arrested at least thirty of Cuichelm's thegns and advisers. They were handed over to Bassus and hanged before the sun went down. He paid the full amount of "were-gild" for the murdered thegns. What more was desired of him? Edwin was appeased. He believed Cynegils to be innocent. The King of Wessex then fully acknowledged the overlordship of Edwin, who returned to York the most powerful sovereign that ever reigned over Britain. He had been Bretwalda since the death of Redwald in 624 over all the other English kingdoms except Kent.

Edwin had long been pondering deeply over the religion of his people, and the question of introducing Christianity. Person-

ally he had ceased to believe in the gods of his ancestors. He also felt that the old religion was fast losing its hold on the people, while some abiding faith was necessary for their happiness and well-being. He conceived that the belief in Woden and the Asyniars had suffered a severe wrench when it was transplanted from its native land to a new country. It was like an uprooted tree that had been replanted and failed to thrive. It was fast withering. So he turned to Christianity. Since the death of Hereric, Porlor was the friend who was most competent to explain its tenets, which he did to the best of his abilities. He advised the baptism of Edwin and the active propagation of the new religion on very much the same grounds that had recommended such a measure to the King. Porlor concluded one long conversation by saying, "Alca, thy sister, was the wisest being this world will ever see. She also pondered over this question — this solemn question — for years. Her last words were, 'Hereric, my sweet cousin, bring me into the fold of Christ.'" Edwin was deeply moved, but he only said, "My own mind is made

up. But I think of my people, not of myself."

One day he was meditating deeply, after Porlor had left him, when Paulinus entered and came towards him with an air of mystery. He put his right hand on the King's head and said, in a solemn voice, "Dost thou know that sign?" The effect was very different from what he anticipated. Edwin sprang to his feet with a look of scorn and contempt, and waved him away. He said, "Here you will always be treated with hospitality and respect as a servant of the Queen. But when I am baptized, it shall be by an honest man, not by a trickster. Go!" Paulinus slunk off, seeing that his miracle had failed to work.

Edwin resolved to assemble the Witan, and to submit the question to the great and wise men of the kingdom. The assembly met in the large hall of the Aldwark at York. Coelred was selected to explain to them the tenets of the Christian faith, which he did as nearly as he could in the words of the beloved Hereric when he addressed Ethelbert and his nobles at Thanet. Edwin then asked the notables what

they thought of the new religion. Coifi had the assurance to speak first. He said that the old belief had no virtue in it, for that no one had more diligently applied himself to the worship of the gods than he had, but they neither inspired him nor would they make his spells work. "Many are more preferred than I, yet, if the gods were good for anything, they would rather favour me, who have been more careful to serve them. Let us receive the new religion without any delay."

Then Saebald, chief of the Billingas, now a very old man, rose and addressed Edwin. He said, "The present life of man, O King, seems to me, in comparison with that which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of rain and snow prevail abroad. The sparrow, I say, flying in at one door and immediately out at another, whilst he is within is safe from the wintry storm; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight, into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this

life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If, therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed." The other thegns and councillors spoke, generally to the same effect. Osric, however, manfully maintained that the people should not abandon the religion of their ancestors.

Coifi again stood up and advised that the temples and altars they had consecrated without reaping any benefit from them should be set on fire. "I, who worshipped through ignorance, will first profane the temples, as an example to others, with the King's permission." Edwin contemptuously, and perhaps thoughtlessly, gave permission, for the buffoonery of the recreant priest would cause pain to many conscientious men. Then Coifi mounted a stallion and set out to destroy the idols. The people thought he was distracted. As soon as he reached the sacred enclosure at Godmundham, he profaned it by hurling a spear into it, and then ordered the venerable images and altars to be destroyed. Coifi was a bad priest of Woden, and was not likely to be a

good Christian. He had no faith. His name appears to be Celtic, and as the priesthood was, as a rule, looked upon as hereditary, it is probable that he was some stray lad who had been adopted by the "Godi" or priest. His guardian, seeing his natural talent as a gleeman, allowed him to pass the first half of his life in that capacity, and Ethelric, for some secret service, promoted him to the priesthood. His final performance in a priestly capacity was that of a buffoon. He was equally dissatisfied with his new religion, and died a year afterwards.

Osric was much incensed at the desecration of the venerable images which had been brought by his ancestors from the Continent when they first settled in England. Coelred and Porlor also thought that the conduct of Coifi was contemptible, and that the things highly valued by their fathers, if their use had ceased, should have been put away with becoming reverence.

King Edwin, with the full consent of the Witan, had now determined to undergo the rite of baptism. He began to build a timber structure near the north-eastern angle of the

walls of York, which was to serve as a baptistery. When it was nearly completed he sent for Sivel, and entrusted him with a mission. "You remember," said the King, "the story of my early life, how I was befriended in Gwynedd by a Christian priest named Urien, and that his son was my playmate. This son was to be brought up for the priesthood. They were true and honest people. My Sivel, I want my playmate to come here and to baptize me." He then explained some topographical details bearing on Urien's country. "It is a difficult, perhaps a dangerous, mission, but I entrust it to you in full confidence that it will succeed in your hands. I and my friends shall be baptized by an honest man, not by a trickster."

Sivel set out alone. His quiet manner, his coolness, and his great experience made him a most skilful diplomatist. He easily made his way to Gwynedd and found his man, the British priest Rhunn ap Urien, who readily consented to return with him. Two months had not elapsed before King Edwin greeted the simple British priest who had once been his playmate, and lodged him comfortably in

the Aldwark. On Easter Sunday of the year 627 King Edwin was baptized, in the wooden baptistery at York, by the British priest Rhunn ap Urien; and with the King his two sons, most of his thegns, and a vast number of common people also received baptism. But Osric the Atheling refused the rite. The baptism was an epoch in the life and reign of Edwin the Great.

CHAPTER VI

THE GREAT BRETWALDA

Edwin had achieved the most excellent and most difficult work that could have been undertaken in that age. He had established profound peace which continued until his death. His sons Offrid and Eadfrid had grown to be fine young men. The former was married and had a son called Iffi, after the King's grandfather. Ethelburga had borne Edwin four children—Eanflaed, born on the fatal day of the assassinations; Ethelhun and Etheldrith, who died in infancy; and a son named Wuscfrea, after the King's great-grandfather. The five paladins were constantly in attendance on Edwin, ready with their services and advice; including Godric, whose sons were old enough to manage his affairs in the country of the Gainas, with the help of his man Wiglaf. Mary Audr (Nanna)

lived with her sister Braga at Stillingfleet, to be near her husband. Bergliot, with her two sons and the royal children Oswin and Ebba, was at Hemingborough, for the wife of Osric was dead, and he too was generally with the King.

The most important matter requiring statesmanlike treatment was the change of religion. The baptism of the King had led to a strong and general tendency among the people in the same direction, but Edwin was determined that no constraint should be used. The choice was to be absolutely free. Rhunn ap Urien remained, baptizing all classes, and by his preaching many believed on Christ. James the Deacon was a most zealous missionary, and visited all parts of the country, explaining the precepts of Christianity, catechising and baptizing. He was the man whom Edwin would have preferred as bishop. But he found that the dismissal of Paulinus would be painful to Ethelburga. He therefore sent for the Roman monk, who was certainly a zealous preacher and a man of ability. The interview took place in the same chamber where he had failed to dupe the King. Edwin

said to Paulinus, "Do your work zealously as the bishop of my church. Preach and baptize. Attend to the spiritual needs of my household and of that of the Queen. But remember! there must be no miracles. In this country men are too shrewd to be treated with such stimulants." Paulinus replied in a becoming manner, and henceforward confined himself to legitimate work; and Pope Honorius sent him the pall. The Bishop of York preached and baptized in Bernicia and in Deira, and in the parts of Lindsey, where he converted Blecca, thegn of the Lindiswaras, and all his family. A man named Deda informed the Venerable Bede that a very old man had told him how he, with a great number of people, was baptized in the river Trent by Paulinus, near Southwell. Deda's informant even described the personal appearance of the Roman Bishop. Edwin himself persuaded Eorpwald, who had succeeded Redwald as King of East Anglia, to embrace Christianity with all his people. There had been a close friendship between them since the battle on the Idle. There was, however, a revolt of the party adhering to the old religion, headed by

a chief named Richbert, and King Eorpwald was murdered. The worship of Woden again prevailed in East Anglia for three years. Then Sigebert, a half-brother of Eorpwald, who had been educated in France, succeeded in 630. The new King invited a monk from Burgundy named Felix to assist him, and when he was made a bishop, gave him Dunwich for his see. Under Sigebert and Felix the East Anglians once more became Christians.

After much consultation with his paladins, the King resolved to build a church of stone at York to replace the wooden baptistery, and to be dedicated to St. Peter. Edwin entrusted the provision of materials to Coelred, and the erection of the edifice to Sivel. The chief of the Stillingas had organised a very efficient fleet to patrol the Humber and its tributaries. There must be no more kidnapping. Every unknown boat was stopped and examined, and the crews had to give a strict account of themselves. A strong patrol was always maintained at the junction of the Ouse and Wharfe. Coelred employed some of his vessels to convey the blocks of limestone from Calcaria

to York, and Porlor superintended the work at the quarries. They were near the ford of Nehalennia, and the brothers often remembered with affection the deity worshipped by their gentle mother, and the memorable day when they visited the shrine at Appleton with the Princess Alca. Sivel was well able to design a working plan. He built with the objects of durability and strength, constructing his walls by laying the stones in the herring-bone fashion. Part of Sivel's walls may still be seen in the crypt of York Minster. The work progressed steadily. The King dedicated a large gold cross and a golden chalice for the use of his church of St. Peter at York, which was not finished at the time of Edwin's death.

The paladins of Edwin desired that as Bretwalda of all Britain he should assume some of the imperial state they had seen at the court of the Emperor Maurice. Sivel called him Basileus and Sebastos in state documents. His banners were borne before him when he rode about to visit all parts of his dominions. On the occasions of his walking along the streets a tuft of feathers fixed on a

spear, called *Tufa* by the Romans, was carried before him. The privilege of performing this duty belonged to Godric.

The King appointed a council consisting of Coelred, Porlor, and Sivel to examine the code of laws established by Ethelbert, to adapt them for use in Northumbria, and to prepare a code for submission to the national "Witan." This assembly of notables of the kingdom was called at regular intervals throughout the reign of Edwin. With some alterations, they adopted the code proposed by the King as the laws of Northumbria. When these great men returned to their homes they were the means of making known the beneficent measures of the King, and of impressing upon all men the importance of abiding by the law and keeping the King's peace. "It was reported that there was then such perfect peace in Britain, wheresoever the dominion of King Edwin extended, that, as it is proverbially said, a woman with her new-born babe might walk throughout the island from sea to sea without receiving any harm." Once Porlor related to Edwin the story of his journey with Coelred across the Vindhya Hills to Ujjayani in India, and de-

scribed the care of the Malwa Rajas for the comfort of their subjects by building fountains along the road at intervals and planting trees. The King was much struck by Porlor's account, and was anxious to imitate a measure which must add so much to the convenience of travellers. He saw the importance of encouraging traffic and movement of all kinds. "In several places where he had seen clear springs near the highways he caused stakes to be fixed with brass dishes hanging at them for the use of passers-by; nor durst any man touch them for any other purpose than that for which they were designed, either through the dread they had of the King or for the affection which they bore him."

All matters relating to the currency were naturally entrusted to Sivel, who was so well informed respecting the working of the mint at Antioch. In Britain it was in a deplorable state of decadence. The Roman coins of three metals were used long after the legions departed, until those in circulation were quite worn out. The expedient was then adopted of melting the defaced money of all three metals together, from which very small coins

were struck called *stycas*. They may be considered to have been worth about a shilling of our time, with reference to buying power. They had some letters or runes on them, but nothing the meaning of which was intelligible, and no king's name. Sivel began with a reform of the *stycas*. He caused Edwin's name as King of the English to be clearly stamped on the obverse; his own name, as the moneyer, with the place (EOFER), on the reverse, and a cross in the centre. There was no room for more on these minute pieces. Sivel was also anxious to introduce a silver penny like those of the Eastern emperors, and he actually designed one. On the obverse was King Edwin's head, with the inscription—

EDVIN : REX : A : BRET :

and on the reverse a winged figure of Alca, and the letters—

SIVEL : SERV : ALCA : DIV :

Several were struck; but it was found that the precious metals at the command of Edwin's government were not sufficiently abundant to bring it into circulation. Sivel had his mint

and treasury at York, and he taught several young English lads to read and write, so as to serve as his scribes. He recorded the events of the reign, the measures that were adopted, and even notes of important speeches delivered in the Witan, such as those of Coifi and Saebald on the occasion of the debate on the change of religion. No one can doubt that such a record once existed who compares the number of anecdotes and incidents and speeches chronicled by Bede respecting the reigns of Edwin and his immediate successors with the meagre lists of dates and names and battles which is all we are told of the other kings of the Heptarchy. Exclusive of monkish miracles and discussions about the date of keeping Easter, no other reign is to be compared with that of Edwin for the amount of information that is given by Bede. It cannot, therefore, be disputed that the good monk of Jarrow must have had before him either Sivel's record or very full extracts from some such document.

Edwin's favourite residence always continued to be at Aldby, near the grave of Alca, but the duties of administration made

his sojourns at York very frequent. He periodically visited all parts of his dominions. In the far north he had a country seat called Adgefrin on the river Glen, where the court often remained for a month at a time. Another country seat was at Catterick, where the fine buildings of the Roman station of Cataractonium were rendered fit for habitation. Here the Deacon James eventually took up his permanent abode. Another was at Campodunum — the modern Tanfield, near Ripon; another at Driffield in the Wolds. At Barwick-in-Elmet the King sometimes resided in a fortified house, near the lofty tumulus erected to the memory of Hereric, the good Atheling. On these occasions he usually invited his cousin Braga, with her saintly little daughters, to keep him company.

Coelred and Porlor snatched occasional intervals to rest from the cares of state with their sisters at Stillingfleet. Good old Tanwin had been gathered to his fathers, but his trusty son Froda was lieutenant to the brothers, and they intended, in the fulness of time, that he should succeed them as leader of

the Stillingas. They enjoyed the rest in the old home and the visits to Bergliot at Hemingborough, where they played with the sons of their beloved Lilla, and taught them warlike exercises. But what Coelred and Porlor loved most in their advancing years was to sit or recline together on the grave of Shuprak, and talk over the past of their eventful lives. Here they could pour out the innermost thoughts of their hearts to each other, and revive all the old memories. From the time that they were little boys they had loved Alca with a pure and holy fervour which entirely prevented any other woman from obtaining a place in their hearts. Now that she was gone, the devoted, loving service was changed into worship and a tender memory. They were, while this life lasted, all in all to each other. It was a very pleasant spot. The mighty trees of the primeval forest, with masses of ferns at their roots, overshadowed them, while a grassy slope extended from Shuprak's grave to the bright little beck which babbled over rounded pebbles under the willow trees. The quickset hedge and the open gateway forming the boundary of

the court of Stillingfleet were visible on the crest of the opposite hill.

One evening, as they were reclining together against the mound over their faithful dog, a clap of thunder rumbled in the distance. It reminded both of the day of the kidnapping. For a long time neither had spoken. How enjoyable is an occasional interval of silence by the side of a dear friend! Coelred was the first to speak. "I remember," he said, "when we all dashed wildly into the forest on that fateful day, I turned my head for a moment and saw our mother standing in the gateway, looking at us with her hand shading her eyes. We were near this very spot." "Dear gentle mother!" said Porlor, "she never saw us or heard of us again. Yet Alca must have cheered her last moments with her gracious confidence that we should return." "I often think," said Coelred, "that there is no difference between the parting of friends on earth and the parting by death—at least it has been so in our case. We came back and found father and mother and many friends cut off by death. We left friends far away, and have never heard of them since. To us there is no

difference." "I think there is a difference," answered Porlor. "Sivel heard of the wicked murder of the Emperor Maurice when he was at Canterbury, and of the cruel slaughter of the good General Narses by the usurper Phocas. How gladly would we have drawn our swords in their defence, or to avenge their deaths! Of the rest of our far-off friends we have heard nothing, it is true. But if we know our friends we can make forecasts which cannot be far wrong. We may be certain that the dear Guru ended his days happily and peacefully, and that death had no terror for him. Good old Monas, after a few years of prayer under his palm trees, passed away in the certainty that his doctrine was the true one, and in the undoubting belief of reward hereafter. But I wonder what has become of that strange young Arab, Muhammad ben Abdallah." "No common fate," exclaimed Coelred. "I think that he now leads the believers in some new religion that he has preached. Remember what old Monas said."

They then talked of themselves, "And what of ourselves?" continued Coelred. "The

Valkyrie have been long in choosing us. Our turn cannot be far off now. Are we ready, my brother?" "I believe," said Porlor, "that we have done the work that was set before us with all our might. That work cannot fail to appear to ourselves, and it certainly appears to the world, to have been of service to our King and our countrymen. Our country has been raised to great prosperity. Alca would have smiled upon us. It is enough. We may rejoice when the Valkyrie choose us." "But this great prosperity—this happiness enjoyed by our country—will it last?" "No," said Porlor, "it cannot last. We must work on until our appointed time, without comprehending the ways of the All-father. There will be wild kings and confusion again and again. But of this be certain:—No good work is ever wasted. All may appear hopeless to those who come after us. They may think our work was in vain. But it is not so. We have done little. Much of our seed is cast among thorns or by the wayside. But some few seeds have fallen on good ground and will bear fruit for ever. We are not unprofitable servants. Our work is done. I feel that our time is near. My

Coelred, we will die together." They wound their arms round each other in a brotherly embrace, as they had done under the palm trees by the Red Sea.

Presently the sound of horse's hoofs was heard, and Godric emerged from the forest. He had come on a visit to Stillingfleet for a day or two, and announced that on the third day they were all summoned to attend the King to Adgefrin. The days passed away happily, and when the time came, Coelred and Porlor bade their sisters a tender farewell. Mounting their horses, they passed through the well-known old gateway for the last time.

At the Aldwark they found the King engaged in conversation with Bassus and Sivel. The great general was representing to Edwin that neither Penda nor Cadwalla was a neighbour on whose good faith reliance could be implicitly placed. Penda, the King of Mercia, had succeeded in 626, not without suspicion that he had made away with his cousin Kearl, the late King, by violence. He was a truculent, faithless man, always committing aggressions on his neighbours, and ever thirsting for blood. He had, however, freely acknowledged the

Bretwaldaship of Edwin, assisted him in his march to Wessex, and continued to profess friendship. Bassus thought that he protested too much. Cadwalla, the King of Gwynedd, although professing Christianity, was a more brutal savage than Penda. He was endowed with some cunning, and also professed friendship for the great Bretwalda. Bassus had reason for suspecting that there was a secret understanding between the two traitors. He was no alarmist, but there had been a long peace, and the King was unsuspicious and overconfident. A sudden invasion would find him unprepared. "What has happened to make you speak thus, my Bassus?" asked the King. The faithful paladin was unable to say that anything had actually happened. "Ah! you think we are rusting in the long peace. If there should ever be war, which God forbid," he added affectionately, "in Bassus will be our hope and our reliance." The other friends had unbounded faith in the military sagacity of their beloved companion. But Edwin would hear no more. Bassus and Sivel remained at York. The rest fared northward, with the King and his family, to the royal country seat of Adgefrin.

CHAPTER VII

THE END

The day had been passed delightfully, hunting in the forests at the bases of Cheviot Hill and Yeavering Bell. The royal party had assembled at a trysting-place for an early supper, and was now riding home to Adgefrin. Edwin looked splendid in his hunting-dress, with his golden locks falling from a light cap, and his fair beard resting on the darker leathern coat. He was superbly mounted, and in one hand he held a hunting-horn. His eyes brightened with pride as he glanced at his gallant young sons, Offrid and Eadfrid. Close behind him rode Osric and his young son Oswin. Then followed Coelred, Porlor, and Godric, with Froda and other faithful retainers bringing up the rear. Alas! it was the good King's last hour of pleasure. The joyous laughter of the

young Athelings rang through the glades as the cavalcade reached home.

Sivel was at the gate, his face full of anxiety, his horse covered with foam and ready to drop. He brought certain news that Penda, the King of Mercia, was marching across the country of the Gainas with a large army, and had given a defiant answer to a messenger who had been sent to ask the cause of his invasion. In a few days he would be on the Don. Cadwalla was known to have an equally large force in motion, and Bassus was sending out scouts to ascertain his position day by day. He had also summoned the Deiran tribes to meet at York.

Edwin sorrowfully remembered the timely warning of his faithful general. Fresh horses were ordered, and the King set out at once, accompanied by the four paladins and his two sons. Osric undertook to guard the Queen, Paulinus, and the children, and to escort them as quickly as possible to Aldby. The King reached York in the first week of October 633. Still worse news awaited him. Cadwalla, with an immense army, had crossed the moors from Chester, and was marching rapidly with the apparent object of forming a junction with

Penda. In a hurried consultation Bassus pointed out that every hour was of moment, as the only hope was in engaging the two armies in detail, before they were in touch of each other. But the Northumbrian force was very small, and there was no time to wait for reinforcements. Bassus wished to attend on the King's person, but Edwin insisted that he must remain at York. "If anything happens to me," he said, "who is to guard my wife and children, who is to save the kingdom if you fall by my side?" Bassus reluctantly yielded. He was to strive to form a second army at York, and guard the Queen.

Edwin left York with a small but valiant force, commanded by himself in person, Coelred, Porlor, Godric, Sivel, the two Athelings, and the principal thegns of Deira. He felt confident that he could dispose of Penda if he could engage him before the arrival of Cadwalla. All depended upon that. At the ford of Nehalennia loyal old Saebald joined the King with his Billingas. But news also came that Cadwalla was already advancing down the valley of the Calder. Edwin increased the rapidity of his marches to the Don.

Hatfield Chase was a vast extent of lake and morass on the lower course of the Don, overgrown with reeds and other water plants, and dotted with islands covered with trees and frequented by deer in great numbers. Penda led his army across this labyrinth, from island to island, wading and sometimes swimming. He had just escaped from his difficulties and drawn up the forces of Mercia on the firm land, when the well-marshalled army of Edwin came in sight. They passed the night facing each other, with the camp fires of both sides visible, and next morning they joined battle.

Edwin rose at dawn and called his chiefs around him. "We must beat the Mercians," he said, "before our other enemies arrive, or we are lost. It is in the hands of God. If it is His will I will die on this field fighting for the right. But keep the men in good heart. Friends and brothers, never in the world's history had king such faithful servants! Living or dying, our hopes, our aims, are one. True and loyal friends, we stand or fall together." He embraced his sons, his four surviving paladins, and the venerable Saebald, whose hair was now white with age. He was seventy-three.

They then all knelt down and received the sacrament from James the Deacon, who offered up prayers for the good men and true who were to fight that day in a righteous cause. It was the morning of the 14th of October 633.

Edwin's army was in three divisions. He entrusted the right to Godric and Saebald, with his son Offrid. Porlor and Eadfrid commanded the left. The King and Coelred were in the centre. Sivel was well mounted, and undertook to bring news to the King from the two wings and to carry orders. The whole line advanced bravely to the attack, the numbers of the two armies being about equal, but Penda had his back to the swamps. Both sides fought most valiantly. At last the Mercians began to give way. Porlor had actually driven a large body into the swamps. The day appeared to be won. At this critical moment Sivel galloped up to report that the Welshmen under Cadwalla were in sight, and rushing down upon the rear of the English right flank in overwhelming numbers. Edwin was obliged to order two-thirds of his force, under Godric and Saebald, to face round and advance to meet the Welsh. Before leaving

with these orders, Coelred called Sivel aside, and entreated him, by their sacred friendship, to save his life. "One of us must survive," he said. "The safety of the widows and children will be in your keeping. My Sivel, you must live on." They pressed each other's hands, and Sivel galloped off with his orders.

Penda now saw that the force opposed to him was so weakened that it was less than half his own strength. He rallied his men, and a terrible slaughter commenced. The Deirans fell where they stood. None fled. There was not a man who was not ready to die for his beloved King. Porlor had closed up from the left, and the brothers were now fighting by the side of Edwin. At this moment Froda arrived with the appalling news that Godric, Saebald and his sons, and Offrid had all been slain, and that the right wing was falling back, overwhelmed by numbers. "Froda, my true friend," said Coelred, "go at speed to the Humber bank, where you will find one of my boats. Hurry to Hemingborough and to Stillingfleet. Tell the ladies to fly with the children to Driffield in the Wolds. Then speed to York and announce

the tidings to Bassus that all is lost. Remember that, when we are dead, Froda the son of Tanwin is chief of the Stillingas." The young man knelt down, kissed the hands of the King, of Coelred, and Porlor, then galloped off in the direction of the Humber.

The very thick of the fight now centred round the King and his two paladins. Their brave men had fallen in heaps. Not one yielded an inch of ground. Edwin retreated fighting until he had a bank about six feet high, covered with tangled briers, at his back. Here he made his last stand. He wielded his sword like a true Viking, but at length a spear-thrust dealt him a mortal wound. He fell. Coelred and Porlor now stood over the body of their King—their backs to the bank, and half surrounded by the foe. It was not the Berserker rage that flashed from their eyes, yet something as terrible. It was the righteous wrath of brave men who foresee the ruin of a great cause. Their blows were dealt with deadly force and with deadly skill. Before the death-dealing strokes their assailants recoiled and paused more than once.

In such moments the brothers clasped hands and exchanged a few words. Then again their swords flashed right and left with lightning speed, dealing death around. Penda himself had been carried away, sorely wounded. There was a semicircle of Mercian dead round the hero brothers, as they protected the body of their King. Another pause. "The Valkyrie have chosen us at last, my Porlor," said Coelred. "They are carrying us away." "To Christ," continued Porlor. Then they both quoted the words of Alca spoken long ago when they were little boys. "We fall in battle, fighting in a righteous cause." These were their last words. There were loud yells and shouts, and an irresistible rush of spearmen, for no sword could touch them. They both fell dead across the body of the King, which they had defended so long and so valiantly. Their hands were clasped, their faces turned to heaven. The battle swept away in another direction, and there was silence. Brambles and ivy and the straggling branch of an overhanging yew tree, through which the sunbeams found their way in flickering light, shaded the mortal remains

KING EDWIN, COELRED, AND PORLOR SLAIN

of three heroes, three among the chief makers of England.

"All is lost!" Froda had realised the fears of Bassus. No hope. Few men had come to his standard. The time was too short. There was no choice for the Queen but immediate flight. The three widows at Hemingborough and Stillingfleet had escaped, with the children, to the fortified post of Driffield on the Wolds. Bassus hastily got one of Coelred's finest vessels ready, and the Queen, with the three children, Eanflaed, Wuscfrea, and Iffi, came from Aldby. Paulinus was at York, and said that he would accompany the Queen to Kent. "Are you not Bishop of York?" said Bassus with surprise. "Is not your duty here? The Queen is safe with me." "My duty is to accompany the Queen," replied York's first bishop, who wanted a safer see. "Coward!" muttered Bassus. "He deserts at the first hint of danger, like the monks sent by Gregory, like Mellitus and Justus when they ran away from Canterbury." Unknown to Bassus, Edwin's golden chalice and cross belonging to the

church at York were appropriated by Paulinus, who wished to make his appearance in Kent more acceptable by the presentation of these treasures. Cadwalla would scarcely have perpetrated such an act as this. So Ethelburga and her children, and her timid bishop, sailed for Kent under the protection of Bassus.

They arrived safely in Kent, where Ethelburga was affectionately received by her brother King Eadbald, and she brought up her daughter Eanflaed at Canterbury. But she could not feel that the boys were safe while they remained in England. She persuaded Bassus to take Wuscfrea and Iffi to Paris, and to put them under the protection of her cousin King Dagobert. They both died in infancy, and were buried with the honours due to royal children, it is believed at St. Denis. Bassus is supposed to have then returned to his native country, and to have died at Rome full of years, fondly cherishing to the last the memory of his beloved friend Lilla.

The saddest thing of all was the fate of Edwin's two brave young sons. The

body of Offrid was never found. Eadfrid was taken prisoner, and shortly afterwards was basely murdered by his cousin Penda.

In the second night after the battle three lights might have been seen flickering over the ghastly field. One came from a lantern held by Wiglaf, Godric's man, who was searching for the body of his master, accompanied by the two sons of that valiant paladin. They found it, and carried it to his home, where it was buried amidst fruit trees, on the site on which afterwards rose the church of East Markham. The other two lights were carried by Sivel and the Deacon James. They found the precious remains lying as they fell under the yew tree. Long they gazed on those peerless forms. "When will God send us their equals?" sighed Sivel. "It must be long, alas!" assented the good Deacon. "Perhaps in His own good time men like them may arise again." The three bodies were borne away to the Humber by many loving hands, and placed in a boat. Proceeding up the Ouse, the boat was met

opposite to Acaster by Froda and a few surviving Stillingas. The bodies of Coelred and Porlor were handed over to them, and were borne slowly to Stillingfleet, where they were interred by the side of Shuprak on the spot they had loved so well. The Deacon James performed the funeral service, and afterwards a tumulus was raised over their grave. Sivel then went to York with the body of the King. Bassus and Ethelburga had already departed. The head of Edwin the Great was interred under the porch of his unfinished church. His body was borne to Aldby, and buried by the side of his sister Alca. Long afterwards it was removed to Whitby by his grand-daughter the Abbess Elflaed.

The work of Edwin and his paladins seemed to be all undone. But it was not so. The good seed was sown. Northumbria flourished wonderfully for nearly a century through the initiative given to progress by Edwin's brilliant administration, and her Kings were Bretwaldas of Britain. A great calamity swept over the land, a storm beat down the ripening grains, but they rose

again, bright and golden, and the sowers had not lived in vain.

Through labour to rest,
Through combat to victory.
THOMAS À KEMPIS.

EPILOGUE

This story will be incomplete if a concluding narrative is not given of the subsequent fates of the friends and relatives of King Edwin and his paladins, of their children and immediate descendants, as well as a brief notice of the historian to whose laborious zeal our knowledge of this striking episode in our annals is due.

As soon as Sivel had performed his pious duties, he took refuge at Driffield, for the Welsh were close upon his track.

Penda and Cadwalla met after the slaughter. As the former was wounded, he determined to return to Mercia, after making a bargain for a share of the plunder. Cadwalla dispersed his army in large parties, moving northwards to kill, harry, and destroy. The Welshmen committed every conceivable atrocity: neither age nor sex was spared, and the savages

revelled in their cruelty. Bilbrough and Ulfskelf were sacked. Hemingborough escaped, but of Stillingfleet not a vestige was left, and the ancient buildings of Aldby were levelled with the ground. Few houses escaped their fury. Finally, they occupied York itself, where there were new scenes of devastation and horror.

Osric collected the remnant of the Deirans at Driffield, who proclaimed him their King. He declared that he adhered to the religion of his ancestors, and if the wretched old Coifi had not died soon after he polluted the sanctuary of Woden, he would probably have been taken to Godmundham and put to death. After months of preparation, Osric advanced to York, where the King of Gwynedd still remained. The King of Deira attacked the Decumanian Gate; but Cadwalla sallied out with his whole army and put the English to flight. Osric was himself among the slain. Cadwalla then marched northwards to subdue the Bernicians. On the death of Edwin, the sons of Ethelfrith had returned from their exile among the Picts, and the eldest, Eanfrid, had been accepted

as King of Bernicia. On the approach of the ferocious Welsh King, he sued for peace, and it was arranged that there should be an interview. Eanfrid came to the enemy's camp with six attendants, and was foully murdered by Cadwalla. Eanfrid had also adhered to the religion of his ancestors. Consequently both these gallant young princes, Osric and Eanfrid, are vilified and slandered by the monks.

Oswald, the son of the peerless Alca, then succeeded, and was joyfully received, both by the Bernicians and Deirans, as their King. He saw that there could be no terms with the faithless Welshman—he must be stamped out. Cadwalla was in the neighbourhood of Hexham, near the Great Wall. When Oswald reached a spot called Heavenfield, he put up a cross, helping to fix it in the ground himself. Then, raising his voice, he cried to his army, "Let us all kneel and jointly beseech the true and living God Almighty in His mercy to defend us from the haughty and fierce enemy. He knows that we have undertaken a just war for the safety of our nation." Advancing towards the enemy at

dawn, he gained a great victory, and Cadwalla was killed at a place called Denisburn, perhaps Dilston.

Oswald came to York, and visited the melancholy ruins of Aldby, where his happy childhood had been passed with his mother, and where he had been torn from the arms of Bergliot by the savage Ethelfrith. He consulted with Sivel, and encouraged him to persevere with the work of building the church of St. Peter at York until it was completed. Oswald applied to the monks of Iona for a bishop, and in 635 they sent him a devout man named Aidan, to whom he assigned the island of Lindisfarne as his episcopal see. "A man of singular meekness, piety, and moderation, and zealous in the cause of God." Oswald was acknowledged as Bretwalda of all Britain in succession to his uncle, Edwin the Great, and "when raised to that height of dominion he always continued humble, affable, and generous to the poor and strangers." The ruthless savage Penda had to add one more crime to the long list before his cup was full. He invaded Northumbria, and killed the good

and saintly Oswald at the battle of Maserfield, probably at Winwick in Lancashire, in the year 642. Oswald's niece Osfrith, Queen of the Mercians, translated her uncle's bones to the Abbey of Bardney in Lincolnshire in 697, and in 909 they were removed into Mercia. The monks traded much with them, as a means of working miraculous cures.

Oswald was succeeded in Bernicia by his half-brother Oswy, who had received a mother's care from Queen Alca, though not her son. He usurped the rights of Oswald's son Ethelwald, the grandson of Alca. In Deira Oswin became king in succession to his father Osric. This excellent prince had been brought up by Bergliot with the sons of Lilla, to whom he was warmly attached. Trondhere, the eldest, became his adviser and constant companion. The younger son, Trumhere, entered the priesthood. During the first year of Oswin's reign the Princess Bergliot died, and was buried by her sons, by Lilla's side, in the old Roman fort at Hemingborough. Oswin was a man of wonderful piety and devotion, and governed Deira very prosperously, with

the aid of Sivel, Trondhere, and Bishop Aidan, during seven happy and prosperous years. He was tall and graceful, affable and always courteous, and most generous, so that he was beloved by all ranks of the people. He was warmly attached to Aidan, who was astonished at his humility, a virtue rare in kings.

A story was recorded by Sivel, and repeated by Bede, which exemplifies this virtue. The King had given Aidan an extraordinarily fine horse, either to use in crossing rivers or in any extraordinary emergency, for ordinarily the Bishop travelled on foot. Soon afterwards, meeting a beggar, Aidan dismounted and presented the horse, with all its royal furniture, to the miserable creature. This was told to the King when he and the Bishop were going in to dinner. Oswin said, "Why did you give the beggar that royal horse which was necessary for your use? Are there not many other horses of less value which would have been good enough to give to the poor?" Aidan answered, "What is it you say, O King? Is that foal of a mare more dear to you than the Son of God?" Upon this they went in to dinner, and the Bishop

sat in his place, but the King, who had just returned from hunting, stood warming himself, with his attendants, at the fire. Suddenly, calling to mind what the Bishop had said to him, Oswin ungirt his sword, gave it to a servant, and hastily knelt before the Bishop asking forgiveness. Aidan was much moved, and, starting up, raised the King, saying he was entirely reconciled, if he would sit down at meat and lay aside all sorrow. The King then began to be merry. The Bishop, on the other hand, became so melancholy as to shed tears. His priest asked him in Gaelic why he wept. In the same language Aidan answered, "I weep because I know the King will not live long. For I never before saw so humble a king, whence I conclude that he will soon be snatched out of this life, for this nation is not worthy of such a ruler."

It was too true. In 650 the ambitious Oswy collected a great army to invade Deira. Oswin assembled a smaller force, and advanced, with Trondhere, to Catterick. But finding that the King of Bernicia had a much larger number of troops, he dismissed his

men to their homes to avoid useless bloodshed, resolving to go into concealment until better times. A certain Eorl named Hunwald promised him a safe place of retirement at Gilling. But Hunwald was a traitor. The place was betrayed to Oswy. On the 20th of August 650 a commander named Ethilwin and several followers forced their way into the house. Like his father Lilla before him, Trondhere threw himself before his master to protect him from the blows of the assassins. But in vain. He was slain and thrown aside, and then the good King Oswin was despatched. One may hope that this was not done by order of Oswy, and that, as in the case of Henry II. and Becket long afterwards, he was only guilty of a hasty word misinterpreted by an unscrupulous servant. For some time the crime was concealed.

It was not known to Sivel, who could hardly have taken a lenient view of the King's conduct, when bitterly resenting the murders of the son of Lilla and of the nephew of Hereric. But he was even then on his death-bed. During the reign of Oswin the last of Edwin's paladins had been chief of

the Billingas, but he had resigned the duties and given up all his rights to Saebald's grandson Osbert, whose two brothers, named Adda and Utta, had become priests. For Sivel was now advanced in years. He lived at York, occupied with his chronicle, his coinage, and the completion of King Edwin's church of St. Peter, or York Minster. His cousin Utta had been one of his clerks, and had since taken orders, but continued to attend on Sivel in his old age. At last his long and useful course was finished, having reached his seventy-first year, and survived all his friends. More than two hundred years afterwards there was a moneyer at York of the same name, who struck coins for King Edwig, and who may not improbably have been a descendant of Sivel's cousin Saebald. Osbert, Adda, and Utta conveyed the body of the last surviving paladin of Edwin the Great from York to Bilbrough. They buried Sivel in the tumulus of his father Vidfinn, by the side of his beloved Forthere. The tumulus was then raised to nearly twice its present height.

Adda became Abbot of Gateshead, and was

afterwards employed in the conversion of the Mercians. Utta was "a man of great gravity and sincerity, and on that account honoured by all men, even the princes of the world." When King Oswy resolved to send an embassy to Ercombert, King of Kent, who had succeeded to his father Eadbald, in 641, to ask for the hand of the daughter of Edwin the Great, he had consulted Sivel with regard to the selection of an ambassador, who recommended his cousin Utta. But the mission did not start until after the funeral of Sivel. King Oswin, Bishop Aidan, and Sivel died within a week of each other; and soon afterwards the mission left York.

Bishop Aidan, before his death on 31st August 650, made an excellent suggestion to Utta. He thought it likely that a storm would be encountered either going or returning, and he gave Utta a keg of oil, saying that if he threw it overboard the rough sea would become smooth. The experiment was remarkably successful, as Bede was told by a priest named Cynemund, who had it from Utta himself.

Eanflaed, the daughter of Edwin by Ethel-

burga of Kent, arrived safely, and was married to King Oswy, the step-son of her aunt, the peerless Alca. She was then twenty-five years of age. The Queen was horrified when she heard of the murder of her cousin Oswin, and recoiled from her husband. He appears to have protested his innocence. Eventually a monastery was built at Gilling, where daily prayers were said for the soul of Oswin, and for forgiveness to the repentant Oswy. The first abbot was Trumhere, the younger son of Lilla and Bergliot, and brother of the murdered Trondhere. Born in 611, Trumhere was a cousin of the slaughtered King, his mother Bergliot having been a sister of Oswin's father. He was brought up in the same monastery with Chad, the future saint, but not under his direction, as Bede says, for they were contemporaries. Trumhere went from Gilling to be the first bishop of the Mercians, with his see at Repton. Resigning his bishopric into the hands of King Wulfhere, who appointed Jaruman to succeed him, Trumhere retired to a monastery. When a very old man, he was the instructor of the historian Bede, and told him the anecdote of

St. Chad, remarked upon by Jeremy Bentham in his *Life of Christ*, touching his habit of praying whenever there was a storm, and the reason he gave for the practice. St. Chad succeeded Jaruman as bishop of the Mercians, and having transferred the see from Repton to Lichfield, he died there in 674. Trumhere survived him for sixteen years.

A few years after Oswy's marriage, his kingdom was exposed to the desolating incursions of the bloodthirsty King Penda of Mercia. He did all in his power to appease the old man. His son Egfrith was even given up as a hostage to the Mercian Queen Cynthryth. He offered immense gifts if Penda would return home and cease to devastate the country. But Penda refused them, swearing to destroy Oswy and all his race. Oswy became desperate. He said, "If the Pagan will not accept our gifts, let us offer them to Him that will, the Lord our God." He vowed that if he was victorious he would dedicate his youngest daughter, Elflaed, to the service of God.

On 15th November 655, the two armies

met on the banks of a stream near Leeds, which was much swollen by the rains. The place was called Winwidfield. Penda's army was vastly superior in numbers to the Northumbrians, and consisted of all the power of the Mercians, besides a contingent of East Anglians led by their king, Ethelhard. The dethroned son of Oswald, Etheldwald, the grandson of Alca, was a spectator, but he did not engage in the battle against his countrymen. Oswy had with him his (illegitimate?) son Alchred. After a well-contested battle, the Mercians were forced back into the swollen water of the flood, where there was much loss of life. Both Penda and Ethelhard were among the dead. There was a great slaughter, and Oswy gained a complete victory. The unfortunate son of Oswald is not again mentioned, and his fate is unknown.

Oswy became very powerful. He was acknowledged as Bretwalda in succession to Oswald, and for some years he personally administered Mercia. Afterwards Peada, the son of Penda, having become a Christian, was allowed to succeed, and was followed by his brothers Wulfhere (659) and Ethelred

(675), who married Oswy's daughter Osfrith. Oswy must have been a man of considerable ability. He died on 15th February 676, leaving a son, Ealhfrith, by a first wife, and four children by Eanflaed. These were Egfrith, his successor; Elfwin, cut off in his youth, which was full of promise; Osfrith, the Mercian Queen; and Elflaed the nun—the four grandchildren of Edwin the Great.

The daughters of Braga now claim our attention. Her younger sister Nanna, or Mary Audr, as Godric loved to call her, died at Driffield soon after their flight thither, and was buried by the side of her brothers. Like her namesake, the wife of Balder, she could not survive the death of her lord. Braga lived on. At the time of Hereric's flight she had a strange dream. She fancied that she was seeking for him most carefully, and could find no sign of him anywhere. After having used all her industry to seek him, she found a most precious jewel under her garment, which, whilst she was looking at it very attentively, cast such a light as spread itself throughout all Britain. It was thought that this dream

was fulfilled in the life of her daughter St. Hilda. Soon after her daughters were grown up, Braga died, and was buried at Stillingfleet with her sister and brothers.

Braga's eldest daughter, Hereswith, married Ethelhard, King of East Anglia, who was slain fighting for Penda at Winwidfield. Her son Aldwulf, who succeeded, eventually became a monk. Hereswith herself retired to the monastery of Chelles near Paris. Hilda wished to follow her sister, but Bishop Aidan recalled her and induced her to lead a monastic life on some land near the banks of the river Wear. She was made Abbess of Heruteu (Hartlepool), and, after some years, was removed thence to be Abbess of Streaneshalch (Whitby), where she was an example of good life and a person of singular piety and grace. She also had considerable influence in church and state; and the famous synod, with Oswy presiding, when Wilfrid confuted Colman in the Easter controversy, was held in her abbey. She was a great sufferer during the last year of her life, and died at Whitby on 17th November 680, aged sixty-six years. She had built another monastery at Hackness, and at the moment of

her death one of the Hackness nuns named Bega (St. Bees) saw her in a vision being carried up to heaven by angels. When the monks came next morning with the news, the Hackness nuns told them that they had known it for some hours. Thus died St. Hilda, the child of Hereric and Braga.

Elflaed, the grandchild of King Edwin, was entrusted to her cousin Hilda when she was at Hartlepool, and removed with her to Whitby. On Hilda's death, Elflaed became abbess, and, on the death of Oswy, her mother Eanflaed came to pass the last years of her life with her child. They translated King Edwin's body from Aldby to Whitby, and there they both died and were buried. Oswy was also buried at Whitby. The death of Elflaed took place in 714.

Both the children of Alca were canonised—St. Oswald and St. Ebba. The sweet little Ebba was brought up by Bergliot at Hemingborough, and early took to a religious life. She was abbess of the monastery of Coludi, now called Coldingham, in Berwickshire. Bede tells us that Ebba died before 679, when the Abbey of Coldingham was burnt down.

Egfrith, the grandson of King Edwin, succeeded his father Oswy in 670, at the age of eighteen, and married Etheldrida, daughter of Anna, King of East Anglia, who preferred a monastic life, and bore him no children. Eventually she obtained her husband's permission to take the veil at Coludi, where St. Ebba, Egfrith's cousin, was abbess, whence she removed to Ely. In 679 this king and his brother-in-law of Mercia had an unfortunate quarrel, and there was a battle on the banks of the Trent, in which young Elfwin, Egfrith's brother, was killed. He was a youth of great promise aged eighteen, and his loss was deplored by both sides. This made it easy for Archbishop Theodore to offer his mediation, and the combatants were appeased. Egfrith was restless and ambitious. In 684 he sent an army to invade Ireland; and the following year he himself led a force to ravage the country of the Picts, much against the advice of Bishop Cuthbert and his other councillors. He was led into an ambush at Dunnichen, on the coast of Forfarshire, and slain on the 20th of May 685, aged forty years, and having reigned fifteen.

Ealhfrith, a son of King Oswy, but not by Eanflaed, succeeded his brother Egfrith, and retrieved the ruined state of the kingdom. He had been instructed by St. Wilfrid, and was very learned in the Scriptures. Adamnan, the Abbot of Iona, was ambassador at Ealhfrith's court, and presented a book he had written on the Holy Places to that King, who sent him back to his country well rewarded. In 697 Osfrith, Queen of the Mercians, sister of Egfrith and grandchild of King Edwin, was murdered, but the circumstances are not related. Her husband Ethelred abdicated in 704 and became a monk at Bardney, where he died in 716. Their son Coelred succeeded his cousin Kenred as King of Mercia in 709, and dying in 716, he was buried at Lichfield. Coelred survived his aunt Elflaed by two years, and was thus the last descendant of King Edwin.

King Ealhfrith of Northumbria died at Driffield in 709, and was succeeded by his son Osred, who was then eight years of age. When only fifteen, he appears to have been murdered, and a usurper named Coenred, or Kenred, seized the government and held it for two years.

He was followed by a king named Osric, who reigned for eleven years, when he is said to have been slain. Then, in 731, King Ceolwulf became ruler of Northumbria, and reigned until 739. He was not of the family of Oswy, but was descended directly from Ida, the first King of Bernicia. He became a monk in 739, leaving the kingdom to his cousin Eadbert, whose brother was Egbert, the Archbishop of York. This learned prelate collected a large library, and ruled the see from 729 to 776. Alcuin was his scholar. Eadbert, after a reign of twenty years, also became a monk in 757, and died in 768.

The Ecclesiastical History of the Venerable Bede is the source whence nearly all the information respecting the historical persons in this story is derived. Bede was born during the reign of King Egfrith in 673, in the country between the Tyne and the Wear. Egfrith granted a tract of land to a friend of his named Biscop in 675, on which he founded Wearmouth; and in 682 Biscop erected the monastery of Jarrow on the banks of the Tyne, and became abbot under the name of Benedict.

This remarkable man travelled several times to Rome, bringing back books and works of art, masons and glaziers. Bede lived in the monastery of Jarrow all his life, from the age of seven. He received instruction in theology and the Scriptures from Trumhere, the son of Lilla and Bergliot, then very old, who thus trained him for his future historical labours. Bede was ordained priest in 705, during the reign of King Ealhfrith of Northumbria, by John, Bishop of Hexham, better known as John of Beverley. Bede seldom left his monastery, but he certainly paid a visit to Archbishop Egbert at York, and was also most probably the occasional guest of Ceolwulf, King of Northumbria, who was a man of singular learning and a great patron of literature. It was Ceolwulf who requested Bede to write the ecclesiastical history, and to whom Bede sent the sheets for his perusal. The great historian died on the 26th of May 735, four years before the retirement of King Ceolwulf into a monastery.

Bede wrote his history about a century after the death of Edwin the Great. He received his education from the son of Lilla,

and derived his materials for the Northumbrian part of his history from the chronicle of Sivel. It was providential that such a man should have arisen at such a juncture, gifted with talent and ardour in the pursuit of learning, and that the times should have been favourable for the composition and preservation of his work. He lived under the reigns of enlightened Kings of Northumbria, whose culture was due to the impetus given to progress by Edwin and his paladins. To one of those kings, the good Ceolwulf, he dedicated his history. He enjoyed the friendship of the best and most learned of the Archbishops of York before the conquest, Egbert, the brother of Eadbert the King. He was furnished with materials from many quarters. But for Bede's history, written under these favourable circumstances, we should know nothing of the early proceedings of the makers of England, nothing of the story of Edwin the Great.

In spite of the excessive number of monkish miracles he records, which testify to his simplicity, and show that he was not in advance of his contemporaries in the matter of credulity, Bede is transparently honest. His

authorities are perfectly safe in his hands, and he gives all his information without a word of alteration. The confidence we may justly repose in its author increases the interest as well as the value of the earliest of our histories.

THE END

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